NAKED HOLIDAY

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They exposed their bodies and their hungry desires

BY DON ELLIOTT

THIS IS AN ORIGINAL NIGHTSTAND BOOK

Too Many Women . . .

that was the trouble at the Sunland Health Colony. Too many women with too much to show, and too anxious to give it away. So Al Fieldston — who had come to the sunbather's camp for peace and quiet and time to write a novel — found himself sinking deeper, ever deeper, into a morass of sexual intrigue. The one girl he loved, grew cold and distant at his touch; but the others . . . Bonnie, Sandra Harriet, Naomi . . . all of them made no pretense. They wanted him to love them: one wanted raw sex, another wanted to be brutally beaten, still another used him like a tool. But they were all beautiful, filled with —

. . . Insatiable Hungers

NAKED HOLIDAY

By DON ELLIOTT

AN ORIGINAL NIGHTSTAND BOOK

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CHAPTER ONE

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL MORNING. Sunlight streamed cheerily through the front windows of my little cabin. I felt like a million dollars. I threw off the light covers, sprang to the window, opened the draperies to let all that glorious sunshine in.

There was a naked girl walking around outside.

For just half a second I thought I was still asleep. She was a blonde goddess, a tall, glowing girl who seemed to give off a radiance of her own. Long gleaming blonde hair hung down to her shoulders, but the back of her neck was the only part of her body that was covered in any way. She had

golden-brown skin—acres of it—and it was all showing.

I stood at the window, drinking in the sight. Her breasts were two big deep bowls, high and round and firm-looking, and tanned the same color as the rest of her body. Little dark reddish-brown nipples jutted up delightfully. Below her breasts, her body swept in a tapering, sensuously-rounded drop to the wide hips. Her buttocks were full but athletically muscular, her thighs flawless, her legs twin delights. And she was a genuine blonde, no doubt about it.

The best part of it all was that this wasn't any dream. The girl outside my cabin was as real as I was. Her name was Joanie Baker, and she was one of the members of the Sunland Health Colony, which I had come to the night before. I had met her last night. It had been a fairly chilly night, and she had been wearing a sweater then. That's all—just a sweater. It covered her down to her navel, and, let me tell you, the effect was plenty startling to see her switching her bare buttocks around so casually.

Well, now it was the next morning, and she wasn't even wearing the sweater. I was glad to see that the upper half of her body matched the lower. If anything, she was even easier on the eyes from the waist up than from the hips down, with those two big tip-tilted bosoms of hers bare to the morning sun.

I didn't bother to go into the adjoining room to wake my buddy Jack. I stepped out on the front porch.

I was stark naked. It was my debut in the nudist world.

I felt a little bit like a man in a nightmare. You know, here's this lovely girl waiting for you to pick her up and take her to a flick, and when you show up at her parents' home to get her you turn out to be stark naked in front of everybody.

Except this wasn't her parents' home. And she was stark naked too.

I took a quick glance at myself before I stepped outside. I didn't want anything embarrassing to be going on.

I stood there in the warm morning sun with every inch of me showing, and I fought the temptation to turn and run back inside.

"Morning," I said hesitantly.

Joanie looked up and smiled. "Hi! I was just about to go in and wake you up for breakfast. How'd you sleep last night?"

"Fine," I said. I tried to keep my eyes above her chin, but it was a losing proposition. They kept drifting downward as if drawn by magnets to those two fleshy globes of hers.

"Think you can make it to the mess hall by yourself?" she asked. "Newcomers sometimes need a while to learn how to find their way around."

"I'm kind of doubtful," I said. "It's down the road, and turn a little—" I shrugged. "You'd better show us. Hold on and I'll wake Jack up."

"Right. Hurry it up, now. We don't want to be late for breakfast," she said cheerily.

I went back into the two-bedroom cabin and pushed open the door of the room that belonged

to my buddy Jack Meehan. Meehan was sound asleep with the covers dragged up over his head. I shook him.

He opened one eye uncertainly. "Huh? Whazzis—"

"Time to get up," I said loudly. "Breakfast time."

"Go 'way."

"Wake up, you dope! Joanie Baker's outside waiting to show us how to get to the mess hall."

"Don't give a damn if she's the Queen of England," Jack mumbled. "What time is it, anyway?"

I looked at my watch, the only thing I was wearing. "Half past seven."

He shuddered and pulled the covers up over his head. "Christ almighty! Come back in two hours, man!"

Putting my hands on my hips, I stared down at him, debating what to do. After a moment I walked to the window and looked out. Joanie was waiting outside, sitting cross-legged in an Indian squat on the grass.

"Well?" she asked.

"He won't wake up."

"Tell him he'll miss breakfast if he doesn't get a move on," she called. "This isn't any country club, you know."

"I shook my head. "I know him, Joanie. When he says he won't wake up, he *won't*."

"Maybe I can fix him," she said.

She rose to her feet, coming up out of that squatting position in a single athletic bound. I gasped at the play of muscles up her flanks and sides as

she got up. I began to get the idea that this girl would be a veritable wildcat in bed, with her calendar-girl body and her sinews of steel. That is, if she went to bed with anybody. I had heard stories that some of these nudists simply didn't believe in sex. Constant exposure dulls their interest, or something.

Joanie came trotting up onto the porch, her breasts going jounce-jounce-jounce with each step. She bounded right past me and headed for Jack's room.

"Don't go in there!" I called. "He isn't—*dressed*," I finished, turning the last word into an idiotic mumble as I realized how foolish I was being at the moment.

I followed her in. She was leaning over Jack, and her breasts were dangling forward until they weren't any more than six inches from the tip of his nose, except that his eyes were screwed tight shut and he didn't know what he was missing.

"Mr. Meehan," she said softly.

Jack didn't stir.

"It's time to get up, Jack," she said.

Not a flicker.

With a single quick gesture she grabbed hold of the quilt on Jack's bed and yanked it off. Meehan was mother naked, curled up in the bed, and as the cool morning air hit him all at once he let out a yelp and opened his eyes.

A moment later, when what he was seeing registered, he let out another yelp. For here was this statuesque blonde standing over him in a schoolteacherish way, her arms on her hips, her legs slight-

ly spread, her bare breasts going up and down rapidly with every breath she took. It was one hell of a way for a man to wake up in the morning, and for a second I thought Meehan would have a stroke. He turned red all over and nearly reached for the coverlet. But Joanie saw the motion and she shook her head.

"You don't need to cover yourself here, Mr. Meehan. Remember? Our bodies are the work of God. We have no reason to hide them."

He nodded. "Sure. I forgot. Reflex, you know." He couldn't take his eyes off those big breasts. Neither could I. They weren't cow-like, mind you. They looked almost like the kind of breasts you see on marble statues in the museum—big and firm, and pointing straight out and up, instead of hanging way down and swinging from side to side.

Joanie said softly, "Let's get up now, Mr. Meehan. It's breakfast time."

"Yeah. Yeah."

Jack foggily groped his way toward the john and closed the door behind him. I heard the water running in there. I stood around and looked blithe and unconcerned, which I wasn't. Joanie had her back to me, and I was running my eyetracks up and down that tanned back and those lovely curving rear cheeks.

A few moments later Jack came out, with his face washed, his hair combed, and his wristwatch wound. We were all ready for breakfast.

"Let's go." Joanie said.

We left the cabin—no need to lock any doors in the Sunland Health Colony—and started down

the road to the mess hall.

At this point I think I ought to hold things up and give you some idea of who I am and how I happened to be strolling down that road in the buff on that particular morning.

My name is Al Fieldston. I'm thirty-four years old. For the past five years I had been working for an advertising agency. Not Madison Avenue, but the next best thing—a Wacker Drive firm, Chicago. Give me the middle west any day. Over those five years I had worked up the scale from an underpaid trainee to an overpaid copywriter. At the present time I was drawing $14,000 a year, which is not terribly much by the standards of some agencies. but which was plenty for a bachelor like me with relatively simple tastes. Besides, there were frequent raises, and all you had to do to survive at our firm was to smile nicely and turn your work in on time. It wasn't the cutthroat sort of operation that some advertising agencies are. It was a nice, friendly place, easygoing and relaxed—which might possibly explain why our billings weren't all they could have been.

To cover briefly the twenty-nine years before my donning of the gray flannel suit: running backwards, it looks like this—two and a half years on the editorial staff of a reactionary Chicago daily paper, two years spent unwillingly in the grasp of the United States Army, one year spent as chief-cook-and-bottle-washer for an Illinois country weekly, one year spent obtaining a Master's degree in Journalism at Columbia University, four years going to college at Northwestern. Before that comes high

school, puberty, grade school, and all the rest, going back to birth in Chicago (South Side) slightly more than a third of a century ago.

So much for past history.

Now, how did I happen to be waking up in a nudist colony with a big-busted blonde parading around in the raw outside my window?

It isn't because I'm a crank or a nature faddist or anything like that. I'm not. I don't mix wheat germ and blackstrap molasses into anything I eat. Nor am I morbidly anxious to see bare bodies of either sex. Masculine nudity has never fascinated me, while in thirty-four years of bachelorhood (minus seventeen months of marriage that I forgot to tell you about above—they happened while I was working for that Chicago newspaper) I've acquired a reasonably good knowledge of the outward anatomy of the feminine body. I'm well aware that some have more than others, but that the basic parts are pretty much the same from one to the next. So it wasn't merely to ogle a lot of bare bosoms and delectable pink buttocks that I came away to the Sunland Health Colony.

No, it was a combination of several other factors. Prime among them was the matter of my advertising agency being the easy-going sort, as I said. You certainly know that every copywriter on Wacker Drive—and Madison too, of course—thinks privately that he might have been a novelist, if only things had worked out a little differently. Perhaps one out of five of these would-be novelists actually has a particular novel all plotted out, ready to be written "as soon as the pressure eases off a

little." And maybe one out of eight of this latter group actually gets around to writing all or most of that projected novel, some day.

Well, I was a member of that one-out-of-five category that had a novel all plotted out. I wanted to move on to the one-out-of-eight that actually gets the damned book written.

It was about this time that I found out about our leave-of-absence plan. In keeping with the relaxed atmosphere of our shop, a scheme exists to permit copywriters and such people to go off by themselves for a while and work on any private creative projects they may have. The deal is that you can have up to ninety days, three solid months. Without pay, of course, but you can't have everything. All you had to do was talk to the right man.

I talked. I came out of the VP's office with permission to take the months of June, July, and August off, provided my desk was clear when I left. The first three weeks of that period would be considered my vacation for the year, and I would be paid for them. The subsequent weeks, up to a total of nine, could be taken without pay. When I returned to the agency, I would slip right back into my slot without suffering any disadvantages.

There was a risk, of course. There was always the possibility that some bright boy from below might shove his way into the accounts I was handling, while I wasn't around to defend myself. But I had to take that chance. I had to risk getting scragged while I was away. I figured ours wasn't the throat-cutting kind of place, and, anyway, I had a couple of good friends who I could probably trust to look

out for my interests while I was gone.

The next step was to find a place to go.

Staying in Chicago to write the book was out of the question. For one thing, *nobody* stays in Chicago in the summertime if he can arrange to be somewhere else. For another, I knew that if I spent the summer close to my telephone I would never get a page written. There would be calls from the office, calls from old friends, calls from old enemies, shows to see, girls to make, etc., etc., etc. I had to get out of town.

Where to?

At this point Jack Meehan came to my aid. Jack was a buddy of mine from my Northwestern days. These days he earns a living—to put it mildly—by writing journalistic-type articles for the big slicks. You've seen his work in the *Post*, the *Digest*, and a lot of other places, under a variety of names. In his thirty-odd years he's been through three wives (he had already been divorced once before his freshman year at college) and he was pulling in something like fifty grand a year from his typewriter lately, which is fair dough in any line.

It was the middle of May, two weeks before the beginning of my leave of absence, and I still hadn't decided where I was going to go to write my novel. And then Jack Meehan called. He made a habit of keeping in touch with me, and generally I got a call from him every time he landed some juicy assignment.

He had one this time. After we talked around for a few minutes, he said, "You'll never guess what sort of story I'm about to start on now."

"I know. *Life* is going to smuggle you into King Saud's harem disguised as a eunuch."

"Not quite, pal. Try again. "

"You're going to play shortstop for a girl baseball team, and illustrate your articles with juicy locker-room candids."

"Wrong again. I'm going to spend the summer in a nudist colony."

"You aren't serious!"

"Why the hell not? You think I'm inhibited, man?"

"What's the deal?" I asked.

It was a good one. One of the big magazines wanted him to do a feature on Nudism. The idea was an unsensational piece, stressing the individualistic character of the nudists, painting them as staunch rugged spirits in the middle of a society of conformists. Any illustrations would be strictly tame, because this was for a family magazine. There was about three thousand bucks in the assignment for Jack, which wouldn't be terribly little for a job that would take him no more than a few weeks of researching.

But on top of that he had arranged an even better deal. Taking his slick-mag outline to a hard-cover house, he got himself commissioned to do a full-length expansion of the magazine article, complete with some rather more revealing photos. The book people figured they had a hot thing, and they wanted Jack to spend the whole summer in the nudist camp, really getting to know the people on all sorts of levels. The advance they had given him made me practically swallow my bubble-gum. And

they expected tremendous sales, television plugs and interviews for Jack, nationwide publicity, and maybe even a magazine condensation of the book after publication, thereby rounding out a neat mag-to-book-to-mag double play.

"I've been shopping around for a place," Jack went on, "and I've got a honey. She's around sixty miles out of Chicago, in pretty secluded territory. I've talked the whole deal out with them and they've agreed to let me stay for the whole summer. I can't mention any names, of course, but it's otherwise okay with them about the article and the book. I drove out there last week to have a look. It's a lot of little cabins and some community buildings. Just like a camp for kids, get it, only the kids are grown up and they don't wear any pants."

"You see any of the inmates?" I asked.

"Just a couple. There's only about nine or ten people there now. It begins crowding up after the first of June, and by midsummer they have around fifty."

"And the ones you saw were just wandering around in the altogether?"

"You guessed it, sonny." I could hear him chuckling over the wire. "I saw a grand total of three nudists. There was an old gentleman of about seventy, and a boy who looked like he was around five. It was sort of a disappointment."

"You said there were *three*," I reminded him.

"Oh. Yeah," he said. "The third one was a girl. Twenty-three or so. Big blonde with the nicest pair of knobs you ever want to dream about. I guess she sort of slipped my mind."

"I'll bet she did."

"She's the friendly type, too. I passed her in the car on the road, and she waved at me, and like I mean *wow*, man! Those big beautiful things hanging under her chin like a couple of howitzers, and I damn near drove into a tree when I saw her." He paused. "It sounds like a restful way to spend a vacation. Swim and sun and read, and peck out a couple lines a day on the typewriter. And when the summer's over I hand in my copy and the publishers shower me with gold. Don't you wish you were a writer, boy? A *real* writer, I mean. not one of those Wacker wacks."

"Yeah," I said remotely. "Yeah, sure." An idea was springing to life in my mind, full-blown and giving off radioactive emissions. "Tell me something, Jack."

"Yeah?"

"You think this nudist camp might have room for a friend of yours?"

CHAPTER TWO

SO THAT WAS HOW I GOT INVOLVED. Jack was a little surprised when I popped the question, but after I explained about the leave-of-absence deal and the novel I planned to write he got very enthusiastic and told me he'd see what he could do for me.

An hour later, he called back.

"I just had a talk with the director of the colony," he told me. "He says there's room for you, provided you pass the interview."

"Interview? What kind of interview?"

"Oh, nothing much," Jack said. "Just a sort of screening that they put you through to make sure you aren't perverted or queer or anything. They want nice healthy-minded people at their camp. They don't want anyone going there out of evil impulses."

"I get it," I said. "Okay, when's the interview?"

"Are you free tomorrow night?"

"I suppose."

"Good. I'll meet you downtown for dinner and then I'll drive you out to his place. He lives in Cicero."

We had a good dinner the next night, and by half past eight we were speeding over to Cicero. The last place I expected to find the director of a nudist camp living was the staid, ultra-conservative suburb of Cicero, but you never can tell. Jack

drove his shiny Mercedes 300-SL as though it were an old Ford he had picked up on the junkheap and souped up; he came within an ice of knocking dents in the little rocket half a dozen times. but he didn't seem to let it bother him. I told myself that if I owned a car that cost $13,000, I'd treat it with more respect than Jack did. But then I figured that if I earned Jack's kind of money maybe the price of the car wouldn't matter much to me either.

At any rate, a little while later we zeroed in on a quiet, suburban street, and I found myself marching up to the front door of a nice-looking stone-walled house about twenty-five years old. I don't know what I was expecting to answer the door—somebody in the nude, probably—and so I was just a bit startled when a pleasant-looking woman of about forty, fully dressed, answered the bell.

She beamed at Jack. "Hello, Mr. Meehan. And this is your friend, Mr.—ah—"

"Fieldston," I supplied. "Al Fieldston."

"Yes. Won't you both come in. Dr. Richards is on the telephone just at the moment, but he'll be with you right away. I'm Mrs. Richards, Mr. Fieldston. I like people to call me Elinor."

I nodded and smiled, and Jack and I went in. We were led into a nicely-furnished place, the tables and chairs in modern decor but having an agreeably *used* look about them. There was an enormous bookcase jam-packed, spreading over two entire walls. I sat down in an armchair. Jack took the couch, and Elinor Richards beamed at us both.

A moment of awkard silence ensued. I was a little startled by three framed photos hanging on the wall of an alcove. One of them showed Elinor Richards, looking plump and bosomy, wearing absolutely nothing at all. The second picture showed a tall, lean man that I took to be Dr. Richards, and he was without a figleaf too. The third picture was the killer, though. It showed a dark-haired girl in her teens smiling sweetly into the camera. She was wearing the nicest pair of mammary protruberances I had seen in a long while, but nothing else, but *nothing*. It was the daughter of the house, I guessed. It seemed an odd way to do things, leaving nude photos of the family hanging up where casual visitors could get a look at the nubile daughter in the altogether, as well as Dr. and Mrs.

I was still pondering this point when the girl herself appeared. She was dressed, incidentally. She looked to be sixteen, maybe seventeen. She was the willowy kind, but her sweater was tight and well-filled. She was wearing a plaid skirt and bobby-sox. A regular teenager, I figured. Automatically I glanced up at the wall, where I could view her without the encumbrances of the sweater and skirt, and I turned red and looked away guiltily. She saw me flick my eyes from the picture to the real thing, but she didn't show any trace of embarrassment.

Elinor said, "This is my daughter Sandra. You've met Mr. Meehan, dear. This is a friend of his, Mr. Al Fieldston."

"Hello," I said.

"Very pleased to meet you," she husked in a

siren's voice, deep and throaty. She looked straight into my eyes and I squirmed. Maybe she was only sixteen, but she was pure concentrated sex. She was saying *very-pleased-to-meet-you* with her body as well as her lips, and let me tell you, it's a discomforting thing to get that kind of greeting from a teenager. It's something like picking up a piece of rope and discovering it's really a high-voltage power line. I sizzled.

She floated across the room, giving me the full benefit of her figure in profile, and another quick glance at the photo on the wall made it evident that everything she was showing me was genuine. Sitting down demurely, she crossed her legs and her skirt rode up above one knee. That struck me as funny. Here was a teenage nudist, accustomed to walking around completely bare-bottomed, but as long as she had clothes on she was determined to pull little coquettish tricks with her sweater and her skirt this way. Funny people, women are.

At that moment Dr. Richards appeared. In clothes, he looked extremely dignified. He was a spare, lanky man somewhat past fifty, with thick grey hair and a conservative taste in clothing. He smiled at me and said, "Ah. Mr. Fieldston."

We had a couple of seconds of hand-shaking and greeting. Then Elinor took orders for drinks, and while we were waiting for them Dr. Richards began to fill me in on the Sunland Health Colony pitch.

The colony was fifteen years old, he said. It had been founded by some philanthropic old codger

from Valparaiso who had enjoyed sunbathing himself, and who left a tract of land and a non-profit organization to administer it. Dr. Richards—who mentioned that he was a professor of math at one of the local universities—was the current director, the top man of a board of five.

"My academic year ends early in June," he said. "I'll be going up there then."

"With your whole family?"

"Of course. We're all devoted outdoors people. Sandra has been a nudist since she was old enough to walk."

We got down to the important part of the interview. He wanted to know all about me—what I did for a living, where I had been educated, on and on and on. Mostly he was trying to find out about my motives for wanting to go to his little skin-camp. I told him about the novel I wanted to write, and how I wanted peace and quiet and fresh air while I wrote it. He didn't exactly ask me about my sex life, but by skirting around the subject he managed to get told that I was a reasonably normal bachelor who wasn't likely to engage in obscene acts in the mess hall or to creep around at night pinching the other colonists.

After about forty minutes of this sort of stuff he seemed to be satisfied with my sincerity.

He said, "You must understand that we have certain rules that have to be observed. If you think any of them are too harsh, say so now and we'll have to consider your application withdrawn."

"What are they?"

"First," he said, "we don't permit the use of

alcoholic beverages in the colony. This is strictly enforced. You see, we can't run the risk of being accused of sponsoring wild orgies, Mr. Fieldston. Beer is available on request from the kitchen.

"Second, we prohibit unauthorized picture-taking. You can bring a camera with you, but all film must be developed on the premises and permission must be obtained from any person who happens to be in the picture, or else the negative will be destroyed. Obviously we must protect the privacy of our members."

"Obviously," I said.

"Third, you must obtain permission before bringing any outside guests into the camp. This should be self-explanatory. We don't want our grounds overrun with curiosity-seekers.

"Fourth, the matter of dress. We don't *require* complete nudity. When the weather is inclement, naturally, our people dress accordingly. As for the rest of the time, we naturally prefer complete nudity, but no one is forced to adhere to it. However, we do object to dressing in a manner calculated to arouse erotic sensations—as, for example, a woman wearing an extremely scanty bikini. And likewise, if you show a total reluctance to remove your clothing at any time in public, we'll have to assume that you have come among us as a *voyeur,* with the intention of spying on us. We reserve the right to request your departure at any time."

"I understand that," I said.

"All right, then. These are the chief conditions under which you'll live. Such minor regulations as we have are posted in each cabin. The fee is $40 a

week, which includes lodgings, linens, and three meals a day."

"That sounds extremely reasonable."

"We're not interested in profit, Mr. Fieldston," Dr. Richards said piously. "Our only aim is to provide a place where those people free of the shackling inhibitions of society may bare their bodies to God's own sunlight. Do you find our company appealing?"

"I'm very anxious to enroll."

"Very well, then. Would you fill out this blank?"

He gave me a mimeographed questionnaire, and I went through it quickly, checking off the boxes that asked whether I had ever had a venereal disease, whether I had ever been convicted of a sexual offense, and such. While I was filling out the form, I noticed that both Sandra and her mother had quietly left the room. I was wondering why, and I found out quickly enough.

Dr. Richards looked at the questionnaire and smiled. "There's only one formality remaining. Would you please remove your clothes, Mr. Fieldston?"

I frowned. "Right here?"

"Please. You'll notice that my wife and daughter have left the room. We understand that exposure is a matter of some difficulty the first time, especially when other people are fully dressed around you. So we spare you the sometimes embarrassing necessity of having to disrobe in front of fully clothed strangers of the opposite sex. But I must ask you to remove your clothes now."

"All right. But why?"

"For—ah—esthetic reasons, Mr. Fieldston. We try to avoid unpleasantness in our colony. If your body should be seriously scarred or deformed in a way that would make you repugnant to our more sensitive members, I'm afraid I would have to reject you."

Shrugging, I peeled out of my clothes. The livingroom door was ajar, and I glanced uneasily at it, half expecting Sandra or her mother to come strolling back in after I had peeled all the way down. They didn't—but I was almost certain I saw Sandra peek around the edge of the door momentarily.

In a few seconds my clothes were neatly deposited on the couch, and I was turning in a slow circle in front of Dr. Richards, feeling mildly silly. But I knew I had nothing to worry about. I don't have any scars or deformities or anything like that, and I've kept myself in pretty fair trim over the years. So after I had completed one full turn, Dr. Richards told me I was accepted for membership, and could put my clothes back on.

When I left there that night, I was a full-fledged member of the Sunland Health Colony for that summer. Jack and I were sharing the same cabin. On the way out, Sandra gave me another how-about-a-roll-in-the-hay? look, and I felt myself starting to fog up.

As I buckled myself into Jack's car I said, "Fill me in on that Sandra item. You know how old she is?"

"Sixteen last month," he said impassively.

"Did she give you eyes like that when you had your interview, Jack?"

"Yep."

"She's really built, too. Did you see that picture of her in the raw, up in that alcove? She's got a pair of knobs that really catch your eye."

"Yep."

The monosyllable kick he was on was beginning to bug me. I said. "Hell, man, it's too bad she's jailbait. If she means those glances she throws around—"

"She does."

"You think she's been around?"

"I *know* she has, man," Jack said flatly.

"You *know?*"

"Not me personally. But I hear things from others. The guy who told me about this place warned me about her. Watch out for the director's nympho daughter, he said. It seems she's been laying for the membership since she turned fourteen."

"What do her parents say?"

"They don't say a damn thing. Either they don't know or else they think it's terribly modern for her to be rolling in the underbrush."

I nibbled my lip, thinking of that eight-by-ten nude print, unretouched, hanging on the wall. Then I thought of the eighteen-year gap in our ages, and I felt ashamed of myself.

Jack dropped me off at my place, and I started right in making lists. For the next ten days, I was busy doing all the things you have to get done before you can go away for a couple of months. You know—pay the gas and electric bills, arrange

to have newspaper delivery stopped, tell the post office where to forward first-class mail, give the one-day-a-week housekeeper her vacation money and tell her not to bother coming in for a while, and so on. At the same time I was busy at the office, getting things wrapped up on time.

By the first of June I was ready. I had severed all my ties with the outside world. The phone was shut off, the windows were shuttered, my suitcase was packed. I didn't take very much. Some socks, a sweater, a couple of changes of underwear, a shirt or two, and three reams of typing paper. You didn't need swimsuits or neckties if you were going to a nudist colony for the summer.

At half past five that evening Jack stopped by with the Mercedes. We crammed my one suitcase and my portable typewriter aboard and took off. We put away a couple of steaks at a restaurant ten miles up the road, and then headed out toward the Sunland Health Colony.

We got just a little bit lost. Just a little. The colony was on a dirt road that branched off a country road that stemmed from a big highway, and we missed a couple of turns and found ourselves practically in Wisconsin before Jack decided we weren't heading the right way. We dug out the roadmaps and retraced our path, Jack goosing the car up to 80 to make up for lost time.

It kept getting darker and darker, until by half past eight it was pitch-black, and I had panicky visions of us wandering around back roads all night. But just before nine Jack muttered, "This looks familiar"—the first words he had spoken in half

an hour—and he swung the car off the road and straight at what seemed to me to be the trunk of a tree.

It wasn't, though. There was a little bit of a path leading into the woods, and a chain strung across the path. A hand lettered sign nailed against one of the trees informed us, PRIVATE ROAD. DO NOT ENTER. HONK HORN FOR ATTENDANT.

Jack honked, good and loud, and the yap of that horn must have been audible all the way up to the St. Lawrence Seaway. We waited two or three minutes.

"Maybe they didn't hear me," Jack said.

"It's a nudist colony, not a retreat for deaf mutes," I told him. "Just be patient."

A couple of moments later, we saw a lantern making its way toward us out of the woods. A slabjawed man of about forty became visible, approaching us. He was wearing a yellow rain-slicker, but he had buttoned it hastily and I could see he wasn't wearing much underneath it.

"Yes?" he said.

"We're new guests," Jack said. "Jack Meehan and Al Fieldston. Dr. Richards knows about us."

He nodded and pulled a fraying index card out of a pocket of the slicker. Consulting it by lantern-light, he decided we were okay.

"Meehan . . . Fieldston. Yeah. Just a minute, now."

He unwrapped the chain that blocked the entrance to the little path. Then, walking in front of us and guiding us with the lantern, he led us inside.

The Mercedes inched ahead, over what must have been three quarters of a mile of winding, weed-infested dirt road. Jack travelled at about eight miles an hour, and the Mercedes seemed practically insulted to be going so slowly. At length we came to another chain stretched across the road. This time the sign accompanying it said, SUNLAND HEALTH COLONY—WELCOME!

Our taciturn guide removed the chain, and we passed between what looked like the one break in a high, gloomy wall, into the camp itself.

Over to our right we saw a building of sorts, well lit, and we could make out people moving within. They seemed to be dancing. We heard music. Our guide said, "You fellows are in Cabin Nine, down near the lake. Drive your car over to the Social Hall and I'll get you Miss Baker. She'll take you down to the cabin."

Obediently, we drove across the broad lawn and pulled up outside the Social Hall. Our man went inside. We walked up on the porch and I saw the most fantastic sight I had ever beheld.

There were about a dozen people in the building, and they were square-dancing. Men and women, and their ages seemed to range from ten to seventy, with a heavy concentration in the thirties. Two or three more—including the caller—were as naked as the day they came into the world. The rest were partially clad, and I mean *partially*. A couple of the women were wearing sweaters only, and another had on a pair of trousers. One of the men had a shirt, another a hat and a pair of socks. Quite a sight.

Quite.

They took as much notice of us as though we were two spiders crawling on the wall. We stood there, waiting for the dance to end, watching them bounce gaily around with various parts of their anatomies flapping up and down. For the first time I began to have real misgivings about my choice of a summer retreat.

"There's the blonde I saw," Jack whispered, nudging me.

I saw and gulped. She was one of the women wearing only a sweater. As I mentioned before, it covered her down to about the navel, leaving all the rest bare. I stared at the exposed beauty of her, at the firm flanks and the trim buttocks and all the rest, and somehow none of this seemed real to me. But there she was, what looked like two eye-popping breasts going up and down with each swing of her hips, under her sweater.

The dance ended, finally, and our friend with the lantern went over and whispered something to her. She nodded and came across the dance floor toward us, smiling amiably.

Perhaps you've never had the experience of having a glorious looking blonde about five feet ten come striding toward you, naked from the navel down. Let me tell you, it's a stunner, especially when she's a total stranger. She came up to us and thrust out her hand.

"Hi," she said. "I'm Joanie Baker. Glad to meet you fellows. Which one of you is which?"

"I'm Jack Meehan," Jack said. "I was here as a visitor a month or so back—"

"That's right. I remember. And so you must

be Al Fieldston. Glad to know you, Al."

"A pleasure," I mumbled, trying desperately to keep my eyes above the hem of her sweater. I didn't want to be thrown out right at the start for lascivious ogling, or something like that.

But she turned around and stepped back into the hall, while we remained sheepishly on the threshold. My eyes came to rest on her shapely rear. The night air was chilly, but I felt sweat dribblets running down my body.

She clapped her hands and said, "Attention, everybody. I want you to meet our two new members. Jack Meehan and Al Fieldston." She pointed to each of us in turn. "No use introducing you to everyone tonight, fellows. Suppose I take you down to your cabin and you can get settled right away?"

"Fine," we said in chorus.

So she walked in front of the car, leading us to our cabin, while Jack's headlights nicely illuminated her buttocks. It's a pleasure to watch the muscles in an athletic woman's rear as she walks, and I didn't ever remember having had such a thorough opportunity. She led us down a narrow road for perhaps two hundred yards, and then we turned left into a little clearing where some other cars were parked.

"Leave your car here, fellows. The cabin isn't very far."

My eyes were getting accustomed to the darkness, and I saw a string of fairly widely-spaced cabins running down the side of a gently sloping hill. At the bottom of the hill were trees fencing the area in.

As we walked, she pointed out some of the

geography. "The lake's right down there behind those trees," she said. "The tennis courts are over there . . . the baseball diamond . . . the handball court . . ." In the dark, we couldn't see a thing, but we nodded anyway.

We stopped in front of the ninth cabin in the row. Joanie went in and turned on the lights, and we carried our luggage in. It consisted of two fair-sized bedrooms with narrow beds, and an adjoining head shared by both us. Simple and rustic, but agreeable.

She said, "The dance will be going on for about another half hour or so, till ten o'clock. That's when our organized activities usually end. Breakfast's at half past seven, and if you're not in the mess hall by eight you won't get served."

"Suppose we can't find our way up front again by ourselves?"

She grinned. "I'll stop by in the morning and get you," she said. "Any problems now?"

"Not yet," I said.

CHAPTER THREE

IT WAS JUST AFTER TEN by the time Jack and I were finished installing ourselves in Cabin Nine of the Sunland Health Colony. A few people were straggling back from the dance now. We saw them going into other cabins, turning on the lights.

"We might as well sack out," Jack suggested.

"Might as well," I agreed. "Time to meet everybody in the morning."

We exchanged uneasy glances. I figured he was probably thinking the same thing I was—that he wanted a good night's sleep before he would feel much like walking nude into a square dance.

Washing up, we headed for our individual bedrooms. I lay awake for a while, thinking of Joanie Baker's buttocks, thinking of the nude photo of Sandra Richards I had seen. Then I told myself annoyedly that I had come up here to write a novel, not to spend my time chasing quail. Besides, Dr. Richards had warned me that any actions which violated the rules of decency or caused embarrassment to other members were likely to result in expulsion. I didn't know exactly how closely the decency of the colony was safeguarded, but I was willing to bet that a couple caught necking anywhere but behind the closed doors of a cabin would get the heave-ho instanter.

After a while I fell asleep, even though it was at least three hours before my normal bedtime. The night passed quickly. The next thing I knew.

the sunlight was streaming in, awakening me, and I was going to the window and looking out at the busty beauty of Joanie Baker, this time unencumbered by the sweater.

You'll remember my describing how with some difficulty we got Meehan awake, and how the three of us started up front for breakfast. It was weird, walking along with this radiant blonde between us, and all three of us bare as the day we came into the world. Joanie walked pretty close to us, and once or twice we collided a little bit and the round fullness of her breast grazed my side. Touching her flesh, in my present super-sensitive state, was like touching a hot iron. I pulled away instinctively every time she brushed me.

It was a glorious morning. Birds were chirping, the sun was warm already, and the air was as fresh and as tangy as new wine. And I had to admit there was something refreshing about getting your clothes off, *all* your clothes, and letting the air get to your skin.

We emerged from the path and I got my first good look at the area we had seen only vaguely the night before. Joanie once again pointed everything out. The social hall was off to the right. Over to the left was the kitchen and mess hall, and further to left was an oddly humpbacked building that housed the colony library, music room, and crafts shop. Straight ahead was what I had taken to be a wall in the dark, but it was merely a solid row of hedges about ten feet high, broken in the middle for an entrance. I could see the dirt road winding off into the woods that lay beyond.

"Hungry?" Joanie asked.

"Starved," I said.

"Me too," Jack chimed in.

We entered the mess hall. I felt a giddy moment of vertigo as, mother-naked, I stepped inside. A single long table ran the length of the room, and about fifteen people were eating. Those parts of their bodies that were visible above the table were absolutly bare. Two waitresses were making the rounds with trays. They were pretty little things, a brunette about eighteen and a redhead perhaps a year or two older, and they, too, were peeled. The redhead came paddling by, on her way back to the kitchen with an empty tray, and she gave me a shy little smile. I jerked my head around and watched her adorable pink backside vanishing kitchenwards.

We sat down. I took the first empty seat in the row, Meehan sat down at my left, and Joanie went around to sit facing us on the other side of the table, with her breasts trained on us like cannon. I felt dazed, so dazed that I looked straight ahead, at Joanie, and not at any of the other people at the table.

There was a frosty moment of silence.

Then I became aware of a pair of breasts jutting over my left shoulder, practically poking into my ear. I looked around and saw that the agreeably constructed pear-shaped mammaries belonged to the brunette waitress, who was waiting to take my order for breakfast.

I had a sudden dizzying impulse to reach around and pat the brunette's buttocks affectionately. It would have been a catastrophe. I restrained myself

with an effort. But the girl was *so* goddam cute—say, 37-25-35, slim but busty, and downright pinchable.

She said, "Good morning. My name's Lorraine, and I'm your waitress this morning. I hope you had a good night's rest."

"Yeah—yeah, sure," Meehan said.

"That's fine," Lorraine beamed. "You're Mr. Jack Meehan, is that it?" She turned to me again. "And you're Mr. Al Fieldston. What would you like to have this morning? We have choice of orange juice or half grapefruit, flapjacks, bacon and eggs, sausages—"

She reeled off a few more items, and then we halted her and ordered. After she had taken Joanie's order too she bounced off into the kitchen. Her rear end had a delectable wiggle when she walked.

I said to Joanie, "Even the employees are nudists around here, eh?"

"Well, they aren't really employees," Joanie said. "Our staff people are generally folks who want to join the colony but who can't afford the fee. Students and that sort. If Dr. Richards likes them, he gives them staff jobs in exchange for room and board." She laughed. "We couldn't very well have people on the staff who weren't sympathetic to our ideals, you understand. It would quite ruin the atmosphere here."

"Quite," I agreed.

Lorraine returned, jiggling pleasantly, bringing with her two orange juices and a grapefruit for Joanie. I gulped the juice down in a couple of swallows. With something inside me, I felt a little

bolder, and started to look up-table at my fellow nudists.

At my immediate right sat a woman, who, out of embarrassment, I had been studiously ignoring. I turned to look at her now, and she smiled and said. "I hope you enjoy your stay here, Mr. Fieldston."

"Ah—thank you," I said. I looked helplessly at Joanie for an introduction. Joanie caught the hint and said. "Fellows, this is Bonnie Carter, one of the real old-timers at Sunland."

Bonnie laughed coldly. "Oh, I'm not such an old-timer, really," she said with a poisonous glance at Joanie. "This is only my sixth summer here. You've been here more than ten years, haven't you, Joanie?"

It was Joanie's turn to look piqued. But she flashed a smile and said, "Eleven, dear. I was only a child when I first was brought here."

It was hard to get much of a glimpse of Bonnie without seeming to be staring, but I managed to turn quickly around and grab a fast eyeful.

She was about thirty-five, and evidently just poised on the borderline between the end of youthful beauty and the begining of middle age. By which I mean that she still had a good figure, but her breasts had developed a bit of a sag and there was slightly too much loose flesh in the vicinity of her throat. She was completely naked, sitting with her legs crossed. Her dark hair was cut short in a stylish way. Her face had a lean, intense look about it, the eyes just a trifle too bulging. It was a hyperthyroid kind of look, if you know what I mean—high-strung. She was wearing a wedding band.

Without much ado, she began to tell me that she was divorced, that she had a five-year-old son in nursery school somewhere, and that she had found that only in the nude was she a *person.* "Taking your clothes off gives you a wonderfully *free* attitude, don't you think, Mr. Fieldston? As though all the strangling bonds of our society are just swept right away."

"Exactly," I ventured.

"May I ask what profession you're in, Mr. Fieldston?"

I gave her a bleak smile. "I'm an advertising man, Mrs. Carter. But I'm here on a leave of absence from my agency. I plan to write a novel this summer."

"Oh, how wonderful!" she gushed. "You're actually escaping from the bondage of *money* and striking a blow for the freedom of your soul. Magnificent!"

While this was going on, Meehan was busily conversing with Joanie, and I was mildly miffed that he should be making time with the blonde while I was locked in conversation with the Carter female. Not that Bonnie didn't appeal to me on the baser levels too, but she wasn't anywhere near the knockout Joanie was. Besides, I had met all too many of Bonnie's kind at cocktail parties in the past, and I had hoped to escape from them here.

After a few minutes I managed to widen the circle of my acquaintances by getting introduced first to the middle-aged man sitting next to Joanie across the table—his name was Norman Keyes and he was a retired businessman, he said—and then to

the fiftyish woman with the 60-inch bust sitting up the table from Bonnie. After ten minutes in the mess hall, the idea of nudity had grown a good deal less startling now that the shock element was wearing off. I was still fascinated by the way the big bowls of Joanie's breasts held themselves up without dangling, and the trim buttocks of the two waitresses sent blushful thoughts through my mind every time the girls wiggled by.

People were beginning to stroll out of the mess hall now. I asked Joanie what the day's program was like.

"Oh, we have no formal program," she said. "Everything's strictly on a voluntary basis. Any organized activity depends on who's interested in what."

"What sort of thing do you have?"

"Well," she said. "Don Riemann conducts a calisthenics course every morning after breakfast. And there are usually a couple of the men interested in playing basketball or baseball or something, and when there are enough for teams we organize games. And there's swimming, or boating, or crafts, or you could go to the music room—we have a big library of classical stuff—or you could just lie around on the grass and relax."

"Or work on your novel," Meehan reminded me.

I nodded. "But I can't work on it round the clock," I said. "What about evenings?"

Joanie shrugged, and the shrug did pretty things to her bosom. "Everything is arranged by the members. Last night we had a square dance, because Norm Keyes was here and he's a good caller.

Sometimes we have a Folksong night, or a game of twenty questions, or even a talent show. And a few of us like to drive into town once in a while and see a movie."

"You put clothes on then," I said anxiously.

Joanie smiled. "Naturally. The people in the town have very strict laws."

I finished my coffee and stood up, realizing as I did so that I was shamelessly exposing myself after having been chastely hidden under the tabletop all during the meal. I fought back the impulse to break and run. *Get used to this nudist stuff, boy. Lose your inhibitions. Make yourself at one with the cosmos.*

We left the mess hall. Joanie excused herself and Meehan and I started to stroll back to our cabin. En route, we came upon a group of gyrating figures that looked for a moment like a bunch of the damned, straight out of Dante. But after a moment I realized it was only Don Riemann's calisthenics group having its daily session.

Riemann was a burly, bronzed, gym-teacher type, around thirty, and he was having the time of his life, bare to the skin in front of about eight parishioners likewise peeled, shouting instructions for the next contortion. I stood by in amazement. The group of exercise-lovers included Bonnie Carter, Norman Keyes, Bess Olin (the sixty-inch-bust grandma type) and five others I didn't know, all but one of them obviously over twenty-one. The exception was a girl of around twelve that I had noticed before. She was a little slip of a thing, with meager little bumps where her breasts were going to be in a couple of

years. I felt embarrassed and uncomfortable watching her gyrating and stooping with the rest.

"Doesn't that make you sick?" I asked Meehan.

"What? Calisthenics? Damn right it does."

"No, I mean the little girl. Running around naked with everybody else."

"You mean little Lolita there?" Jack laughed. "Don't let your Victorian ways show through, Al. That's the right way to do it—get a kid into this thing young, before she's all full of inhibitions and stuff. What's the use of raising girls so they faint dead away the first time they see a naked man?"

"I guess you're right," I admitted. "But I suppose I'm a puritan at heart."

We walked on. I told myself that it was a good and pure thing for girls of twelve to belong to nudist colonies. So far there didn't seem to be any little boys of thirteen on the premises, at any rate. It was still early in the season. I realized that this vacation was going to be a valuable experience for me. It was teaching me already how, despite all my pretenses of being an emancipated bachelor on the make, I was still able to be shocked. It's easy to talk a good game about how the pretenses and cockeyed inhibitions of society ought to be thrown in the ashcan. But it's one thing to use that line on a girl you're trying to lure into bed, and another thing altogether when you see a place like this where the inhibitions and pretenses *are* thrown into the ashcan.

We returned to our cabin and made the beds. There wasn't any maid service around here; once a week you got a change of linen, but that was it.

By the time we had finished getting the place in order, it was still only half past eight. The chores were done, and an enormous expanse of daytime stretched out in front of us.

We stepped out onto the porch. I heard giggling, and saw our waitress, Lorraine, come sprinting down the hill toward the lake, followed closely by a long, lean, dark-complected customer I had never seen before. Both of them were in the raw, of course. It looked like a scene from an ancient Greek vase—Nymph Pursued by Satyr. Lorraine was running pretty fast, and those lovely little knobs of hers were bobbling up and down in a way that made my blood course a little faster.

She waved to us, gaily, as she flashed past.

"Where to?" I yelled.

"The lake! Come on along!"

I looked at Meehan and we shrugged and joined the wild dash. We all plunged down through the opening in the trees and emerged in a level area that ran gently to the water's edge. A rickety-looking dock extended out about forty feet, and boats were tethered to it. We came to a halt, panting and giggling. Lorraine's virginal-looking young breasts were pumping wildly up and down, and sweatbeads glistened all over her.

Between gasps she said, "Want you to meet—Nick Riccio, the assistant chef—Nick—Al Fieldston—Jack Meehan—"

While Lorraine caught her breath, Jack and I shook hands with Riccio. He was about six three and couldn't have weighed more than 170—one of those lean Italians whose muscles are long and flat,

like a racer's. He seemed friendly enough, but there was something faintly sinister about him, I thought. Probably my imagination. At the time I was growing up in Chicago, *Italian* was synonymous with *gangster*, and I guess I had never really managed to rid myself of that stereotype. A bad way to judge people, I told myself.

We capered out onto the dock. There was a diving board at the very end, and Lorraine scampered up on it and took off into space. There are few more stirring sights in all the world than watching a beauty of eighteen or nineteen do a swan dive in the nude. She seemed to float into the water, making a flawless arc through her breasts and buttocks. She bobbed up immediately, laughing, beckoning us in.

I didn't feel like risking the diving board. I jumped in from the dockside, while Riccio executed a neat jacknife, and Meehan followed with a degrading bellywhop. We splashed around in the cold, clear water for a while. The calisthenics group had broken up, and most of them, too, came down to join us for a swim. By the time an hour had gone by, the water around the dock was crowded, and you could see breasts and buttocks and arms and legs come flailing up to the surface from time to time like disembodied parts.

The horseplay was getting pretty rough and frenzied, and I had lost whatever inhibitions I might have had earlier. I lost one inhibition too many and made a mistake.

Actually it was an accident, to begin with. We were splashing about, and there was water in my

eyes and I couldn't see. and while I was trying to get my bearings someone collided with me. I reached out involuntarily and my hand came in contact with flesh.

Firm, springy, round flesh.

A woman's breast. Not too big, not too small. Just a neat handful, with a stiff little nipple thrusting into my palm. It was all an accident, but a nice one. I opened my eyes and realized that Lorraine had backed right into me, and I had grabbed her breast and was holding on to keep from going under. There she was, with her buttocks flattened up against me and my arm around her and my left hand cupping her breast, all of this going on just below the surface. For the first time since I had peeled off my clothes, I felt my masculinity asserting itself, and I was glad I was under water.

We maintained the pleasant contact for a moment, and I guess if nobody else had been around we would have gone right ahead all the way. But then Lorraine seemed to come to her senses.

"Sorry," she cried, and swam away.

I trod water for a moment, trying to get back to normal. I was forming all sorts of interesting plans concerning the lithe brunette.

But all of a sudden, Nick Riccio popped up out of nowhere next to me. He looked blazing mad.

"I saw that, wiseguy." he muttered in a low voice, and there was nothing stereotyped about him now. He *was* sinister.

"Huh?"

"Don't play dumb, pal. I saw the whole thing, the way you groped Lorraine."

I smiled, I hoped appeasingly. "Hell, you've got the wrong idea. She bumped into me and I grabbed her to keep from going under."

"You grabbed her a nice long time. Just don't do it again, pal. I'll forgive you because you're new here. But Lorraine isn't free for grabs."

He turned and swam away. Suddenly I had lost all interest in swimming. I found the ladder and hauled myself up on the dock.

Looking down, I saw the turmoil going on. I also saw Riccio and Lorraine far out near the boundary buoy, and he looked meaner than ever. Bonnie Carter waved to me. I ignored her. Meehan spotted me, and came out of the water.

"You look upset," he said.

I nodded. "Make a note not to fool around with that Lorraine item," I said. "I just grabbed her, and Riccio let me know she was his private property."

"He looks like a tough customer."

"He is. Hell, it was an *accident*, Jack."

"Yeah," he said. "I know all about it."

"Now listen, Jack—"

"Can it. You through swimming?"

"For now," I said.

"Me too. Let's go get some sunshine."

CHAPTER FOUR

WE LEGGED IT UP THE HILL to our cabin. Meehan spread a blanket in front on the grass and sprawled out on it. I decided I was going to get a fast start on my book. I dragged a table out of the cabin, set it up front, and got out my typewriter and some blank paper. Meehan was half asleep, but he grinned at me and said, "You going to write your book?"

"I'm not going to wait till next Christmas," I told him.

I rolled a sheet of paper into the typewriter and stared at the keyboard. Now that I was actually right on the brink of beginning. I felt a sudden queasy sensation in my stomach. I had been *talking* about doing the book for years and years. Now I was finally calling my own bluff. I didn't have any more excuses.

How the hell do you begin? I wondered.

I typed out CHAPTER ONE and stared at the page. I was thinking that there were two or three hundred pages after this one, and all of them had to be written one word at a time. Sixty, seventy thousand words, at least. I shuddered at the thought of filling all those nice blank sheets of paper with words. It seemed like a staggering task to write an entire consecutive novel in one big piece.

I lit up a cigarette and scowled at the typewriter for maybe ten minutes. People kept walking past, and I kept looking up at them. Joanie went

by two or three times, and the redhaired waitress, and Lorraine and Riccio, and practically everybody else. All of them saw I was trying to work, and kept far away. Personal privacy was a big thing at Sunland, evidently. But the mere fact that so many provocative bosoms and backsides were passing in front of me all the time proved to be distracting. Meehan was sprawled out on his stomach, watching the passing parade out of half-closed eyes.

After a long silence he said, "Al?"

"Mmm?"

"You aren't typing much."

"I'm thinking." I said, wishing he would shut up.

But he didn't. "I'm thinking too," he said. "About Joanie Baker. What do you think of her?"

"She's a knockout," I said, looking up sourly. "She's stacked and she's got a fabulous body. Did you need my opinion that badly?"

"Just wondering," he said. "Think she's a virgin?"

"How the hell would *I* know?"

"You've seen enough."

I shrugged. "She looks like the healthy uninhibited kind. She probably wouldn't mind a nice healthy lay every now and then. You understand?"

"Aren't you?" he shot back.

"Jack, I'm trying to work—"

"Just let me get my point across. I say she won't put out."

"Why don't you go try finding out?"

"I will, man. But the prognosis isn't favorable. I say she's a dyke, Al."

I goggled at him. "Her? Why, she's so goddam

normal she's sick! If that girl's a lesbian then so am I."

Jack laughed. "You like to sleep with girls, don't you? Well, so does she."

"How can you tell?"

"Just a trained instinct of mine," Jack said. "She's like a girl scout who never grew up, get me? And you know what sort of stuff goes on in girl-scout camp—"

"All right, all right. So she's a dyke. Will you let me get some work done, now?" I grumbled.

He clammed up, and I went back to staring at the blank sheet in the typewriter. The thought of Joanie Baker being lesbian bothered me. It didn't seem right that a girl with such marvelous breasts, with those wide hips and strong loins, should be queer. She was built to love, I told myself. Having her ought to be like making love to a surging river. I pictured myself lying beside her, her muscular body rippling, her sinews tensing with passion, and shook my head. Jack had a sort of instinct about such things, but this time I doubted him. Nothing in Joanie's behavior had been anything but apple-pie normal. Maybe she was a virgin, maybe she just didn't have any use for sex at all, but I couldn't see her as lesbian or anything.

I managed to stop thinking about her. I tried to concentrate on the book.

After five more minutes I realized that my mistake was in trying to begin the thing just like that, right off the bat. Writing a book was a big job, especially the first time you tried it. You had to work up to it in slow easy stages.

Instead of starting to write the book, the thing to do was to write an outline of the plot. Four or five pages, nothing very elaborate. Then, I told myself, I'd take the outline and work it over, expanding it, filling in the background and the characters, until I had around twenty pages written. Then I could block the outline off into chapters and begin the book. It was a lot easier to think in terms of a bunch of twelve or fifteen-page chapters than it was to keep the whole plot together in my mind.

So I started to tap out the outline.

It came pretty easily. After all, I had been carrying the book around in my head for a few years. It was set in an advertising-agency background, because that was what I knew best, but I didn't figure the book to be autobiographical in any way. My hero was a hard-driving louse, who would claw his way to the top of the agency only to learn when he got there that fame and fortune and $100,000 a year wasn't all there was to life, and that now that he had reached the top he had to admit that he was a pretty hollow sort of person who had sacrificed himself for a goal that wasn't worth the sacrifice.

Nothing profound and Joycean, you see. But I figured it was a good honest theme, and I could back it up with plenty of authentic background detail and characters. It was a story I understood, and a story I wanted to tell, and a story I would feel better for having told. What the hell, it wouldn't be art, but at least it would be a sincere effort, and I might even make a few bucks out of it besides.

I wasn't worried about that part of it. As I said. I earned enough dough to keep me happy without needing a six-figure sale to Hollywood. Not that I would object to one, mind you.

So I sat there tapping out the words, one after another. I became oblivious to the world around me. I knew it was getting hot, and I was dripping in my own sweat, but I didn't mind that. I kept going until I had five and a half pages of outline typed out, and I felt pretty exhausted, and I stopped and looked up.

Bonnie Carter was standing right in front of me, stark naked, smiling.

I snapped out of the dream-world of my book and back to reality. The snap was so sudden that I didn't have time to adjust to the special sort of reality I had been living in all day, and it struck me with a jolt that I was sitting here typing away with nothing on and everything hanging out visibly. Automatically I clamped my knees tight together in embarrassment. Then I relaxed, remembering where I was and that concealment didn't matter here.

"I've been standing here for fifteen minutes," Bonnie said. "You were so absorbed in your work you didn't notice me, Mr. Fieldston."

I managed a foolish smile. I really hadn't known she was there. I looked at her, and just then she looked closer to thirty than forty. She had been swimming, and her body still gleamed moistly, and when she stood with her shoulders straight there was hardly any sag to her bosom. Her legs were thin and good to look at, and all in all she seemed

attractive right then, even though she had been one hell of a drag at the breakfast table. The only thing that bothered me about her was the slightly popeyed look she had, the hyperthyroid bit.

Somewhere a gong sounded. "Lunchtime," I heard Joanie Baker yell distantly. I looked at my watch and was surprised to see that it was quarter to twelve. I had spent the whole morning on my miserable few pages.

Meehan scrambled to his feet and said, "Coming up front, Al?"

"Couple of minutes," I said. "I want to read over what I've written. Don't wait for me."

"I'll save you a place," he said.

He ambled off. I smiled at Bonnie and, picking up the typewriter and the package of typewriter paper, went into the cabin. I was standing by my bed, reading the first couple of paragraphs of the outline, when I heard the cabin door open and close again.

"I told you not to wait for me, Jack!" I called without looking up.

"My name isn't Jack," Bonnie said softly.

She came into the bedroom, naked, and closed the door. She slipped the door-hook through the eye. She looked flushed and more youthful than ever.

I was surprised and almost a little annoyed. There were supposed to be rules about knocking before you went into someone else's cabin. And you weren't supposed to set up situations like this, either.

I don't know what I would have said—something impolite, maybe—but suddenly my body took a hand in the situation without consulting me. Up

till now, there had always been a group of at least three, and the social frame had acted as an inhibitor. But now here I was locked into a bedroom with a strange and rather good-looking woman, and both of us were naked. My natural masculine reaction occurred. Bonnie saw me getting excited, and she moved toward me, and suddenly I wasn't annoyed any more.

"It's going to be a marvelous novel, Al," she breathed huskily. "I can tell. I watched how hard you were working. I'd like to read your manuscript, if you wouldn't mind."

"It isn't really a manuscript yet," I said awkwardly. "I was just working on the outline—"

And then she came another step closer to me, and all discussion of manuscript-reading came to an end. She pressed herself up against me, and I gasped with pleasure—it had been a respectably long time since I last had had a woman—and my arms went around her, sliding down her back to the full, quivering flesh of her buttocks, and then I brought my hands up to cup the heaviness of her breasts. Her nipples rose stiffly into my palms like two live things moving of their own free will. Her mouth approached mine; for a moment I stared deep into her hyperthyroid eyes, reading the hunger for a man, *any* man, and then my lips were against hers and my eyes were shut tight and my tongue was exploring the inside of her mouth.

Still clasped in a tight embrace, we tumbled down onto my narrow bed. She was panting and gasping now, and she had a wild look about her. Her breasts leaped and jiggled with each motion she

made. I wanted to slow things up a little, to bring them along a little more subtly. But she wasn't in the mood for subtlety. She pulled at me and cried out, "Take me, Al, take me!" and I did.

She gave a convulsive quiver all over her body, while I gritted my teeth and tried to stay cool, and the tips of her fingers dug painfully into the knotted muscles of my back. And she quivered again and again and again, every quiver a tremor of pure delight for her, and then finally I couldn't hold out any longer.

My heart was thundering. I propped myself up on my elbows and looked down at her. Her eyes were open, and they still had the hyperthyroid look. But the pupils had changed color, it seemed—from blue to a smoky green—and she had lost the tense, neurotic look she had worn at breakfast time.

She smiled at me. "What time is it?" she asked coolly.

I've been asked many things after a bout of *amour*, but never in such a matter-of-fact tone of voice. I looked at my watch. "Five after twelve," I said. The whole thing had taken no more than ten or fifteen minutes. It had seemed endless, but you never can be very sure of time-perception at times like that.

She said. "We'd better get up. It would be a shame to miss lunch."

"I suppose it would." I said, a little sourly.

I pried myself loose from her and went into the john to tidy myself up. When I came out, Bonnie was sitting up, rearranging her coiffeur.

She smiled again. "I did it four times, darling."

she reported blandly, as though telling me about her boy's latest report card.

I didn't have any handy response to make. I just grinned foolishly. I began to get the notion that this Bonnie was quite a character. *Quite.*

We headed for the mess hall. Everyone else had long since gone up, and the grounds and road lay empty and quiet in the noonday sun. Bonnie said, "I hope you aren't shocked by my behavior."

"It's a pleasant way to be shocked," I said.

"I have an uncontrollable sex urge," she confided. "I had to have a divorce because my husband couldn't satisfy me. I went to a psychoanalyst to see if he could reduce my sex drive, but that ended in a fiasco when I seduced him. I'm really not a healthy woman, Al."

"You're healthy enough."

"Yes, but it's not *right*. I'm shameless. This morning at breakfast I knew I had to have you before the day was out. I could feel the throbbing that had to be stilled, the fire that had to be quenched—"

I began to form a pretty clear picture of Bonnie Carter. She was a spoiled, self-indulgent rich bitch with a hopped-up metabolism and an insatiable hunger for men, which she apologized for afterwards. There had been nothing very personal in her seduction of me. She felt a throbbing, so she walked into my bedroom. Most likely a candle would have served her just as well.

We reached the mess hall and walked in. A few people looked up at us as we came in, but most of the colonists had the decency not to make

a fuss about the fact that Bonnie and I were arriving twenty minutes late for lunch together.

I practically collided with Lorraine as she came out of the kitchen, toting a tray. She carried the tray hugged up against her midsection so that her breasts actually rested on it. It made a neat effect, as though she were serving them for lunch. She smiled at me, but it was a guilty smile, and she reddened. She blushed all the way down to the tray.

I took a seat next to Meehan and Joanie. Bonnie found a seat at the far end of the table. I was sitting next to Don Riemann, the calisthenics lad, and we introduced ourselves. Lorraine came over and took my order for lunch. She was polite but distant. I imagined Riccio had given her a good talking-to.

I ate quickly, catching up with the others. After lunch, Joanie stood up and made an announcement. "Attention, everybody. Don Riemann wants me to tell you that he'll be conducting a class in advanced tumbling this afternoon at two. Anybody who's interested, meet with Don at the mats near the tennis court."

That little chore over, Joanie dismissed the group. I wandered outside with Meehan. The moment we were alone, Jack said, "It took you a long time to get to lunch today."

"Yeah. Didn't it?"

"I saw the Carter woman go back into the cabin, but I figured it wasn't my business."

I chuckled. "She's a regular hellion. I can tell you that there's at least one woman around this place who isn't a lesbian."

"Wild, huh?"

"The works. And all in fifteen minutes," I said.

Jack frowned. "She looks like the clinging type. You may be in for more bother than you're bargaining for."

"I'm not bargaining for anything," I told him. "She's a nympho. When she uses me up, she'll start on you. Be prepared, man. Like I mean, *ready*."

"It's my motto," he grinned. "I'd much rather be chased by that Baker girl, though."

"Queer or no?"

He shrugged. "I like a challenge."

"Speak of the devil." I muttered, as Joanie advanced on us from the rear.

"Mr. Fieldston," she called. "Al! Could I talk to you for a moment—alone?"

"With pleasure," I said.

Meehan gave me a curdled look of envy and walked away. Joanie headed for the rear steps of the social hall. She sat down on the steps, in a probably unintentionally provocative legs-wide position. My bout with Bonnie, though, had left me better able to resist the unnerving impact of Joanie's magnificently full-blown nakedness. I sat down next to her, studying her deep breasts with academic interest.

She said, "I don't mean to pry into your personal affairs, Al. But I couldn't help noticing today that you seem to be developing an—ahem—interest in Bonnie Carter."

I fidgeted. "Well, not really. I mean, that is, Bonnie seems friendly to me—"

Joanie flashed the girl-scout smile. "Around here we don't have to be tied down with petty modesty,

Al. Bonnie was seen going into your cabin when the lunch-gong rang, and the two of you didn't show up for fifteen minutes. I don't think I'm jumping to conclusions when I assume—"

"You assume correctly," I said.

"Don't think I'm trying to meddle. I just want to warn you about Bonnie, Al."

"Warn me?"

"She's an extremely sick woman."

"I can see that already."

"She's highly neurotic on the subject of sex. Dr. Richards keeps considering asking her to leave the colony, but he's such a gentle man he can't bear to hurt Bonnie. Besides, she's never offensive in public. But I want you to know what you're getting mixed up with."

I nodded. "I could tell she wasn't normal. She practically raped me at lunchtime."

Each summer she picks out a man," Joanie said. "She can be very demanding. If she gets any encouragement at all, she can be almost intolerably possessive. She might keep you from working on your novel. Now, for all I know Bonnie may be just the sort of woman you want. But if she isn't I advise you to lay down the law to her right away, before she begins to think she owns you." Joanie was still smiling cheerfully. "You must think I'm a dreadful meddler. But I'm only interested in protecting you from that—that bottomless pit of a woman."

It was an unfortunate metaphor, and it broke me up. Joanie started to laugh too, even if she didn't see what was funny. I told her that I ap-

preciated the warning, and that I would do my best to disentangle myself from Bonnie's clutches right away.

And then—unexpectedly—I reached out and put my hand on Joanie's thigh.

"Joanie—"

Deftly she removed the hand. "Sorry, Al. I think you're swell, but please don't—"

I suspended my hand in midair, about to reach out for Joanie's swelling breasts, and then my sanity returned. She was still smiling, but there was a strange expression in her eyes, a steely expression of contempt and loathing masked by surface friendliness.

I was rocked.

"I'm sorry," I said. "You're a very beautiful girl, Joanie. I got carried away, I guess."

"I understand how it is. But I'm not—not available. I don't mind displaying my body, but you mustn't assume that every nudist is automatically—automatically—"

"Sure," I said, profoundly uncomfortable. "It was an accident. Forgive me."

We parted friends. But I felt a tight band of anguish across my belly as I walked alone back to the cabin. It was by way of being a hectic day. And I had made two mistakes already. Life in the nudist colony was not quite the uninhibited orgy some people might picture. If anything, the absence of clothes made for a much more complicated system of *mores*.

In the water this morning I had made an involuntary grab for the lovely Lorraine, only to find out that she was spoken for. And just now I had

been within inches of caressing the most superb bosom God ever fashioned, only to have a steel wall clang down. And—between the two incidents—I had practically been raped by an attractive but somewhat overripe and definitely whacky nympho. An odd sequence of events. I thought longingly of Lorraine's pretty boobs, and of the Aphrodite that was Joanie Baker. I couldn't have either of them. But I *could* have Bonnie Carter, and I didn't want her. It always seems to be that way.

Meehan was jotting down some notes when I came into the cabin. He looked up.

"Well, Romeo? What was the powwow about?"

"Joanie wanted to warn me about the Carter female," I said. "Seems Bonnie eats men alive. Joanie gave me the tip that I ought to break things up in a hurry."

"Sounds like good advice."

"And then I made a pass," I said. "It was sort of an accident again. Like I mean, here was her thigh, and there was my hand, and—"

I saw a cold glare of jealousy flicker in my pal's eyes. He said, "You want every woman in the goddam place, don't you, Al?"

"This one's all yours," I said. "My hand got removed as if it were a sprig of poison ivy. She told me she just wasn't available. Your theory may be right after all, much as I hate to admit it." I sighed wistfully. "But there's something wrong with the universe if she's really queer.

"A body like that was built for love. With men. I mean."

"There ought to be a law."

CHAPTER FIVE

ONE THING BECAME CLEAR ABOUT BONNIE right away. She was a leech.

She left me alone for an hour after lunch. During that hour I had time to read through the outline I had written and to pencil a lot of suggestions and ideas in the margins. Then Bonnie came bouncing up to the cabin, her breasts doing a jig with every step. She was waving a tennis racquet around.

"How about a game?" she wanted to know.

"I'm not much of a tennis player," I told her lamely.

"That's all right. Neither am I. But it's such wonderful fun."

I heaved a sigh. It was a bright and sunny afternoon, and I figured I had done all the work I was going to do on my book for the day. Two hours with the typewriter before lunch had left me pretty winded. I was going to have to get into shape slowly for writing the book.

So a game of tennis wouldn't be a bad idea. On the other hand, I was uneasy about gettng myself further involved with Bonnie. And on the third hand, I had to admit that Bonnie was pretty good in the sack, and I might have some further fun with her.

"I don't have a tennis racquet," I said.

"Oh, we can borrow one. I think Ernie Bryan has a racquet he could lend you."

Shrugging, I let myself be led away. Ernie Bryan

was one of the colonists that I hadn't yet met formally, but he had been pointed out to me. He was a family-style nudist, the father of the twelve-year-old girl I had seen doing calisthenics earlier.

The Bryan cabin was Number Four. Bonnie knocked and the little girl came out, flaunting her unformed breasts in my face without embarrassment.

Bonnie said, "Janey, is your father home?"

"Uh-huh. Come on inside."

We went in. The Family Bryan was there. Ernie was a tall, strapping fellow, around forty. He was hard at work repairing the electrical wiring in the cabin, while his wife Reena held the stool for him. Reena was a brunette of thirty-five, tanned all over and very nicely built, with high small breasts and a prettily tapering *derriere*. The remaining member of the Bryan family was Ernie Junior, who was five.

Of course, all of them were without a stitch of clothing.

Bonnie introduced me and borrowed the tennis racquet without much palaver, and off we went to the tennis courts. I was impressed with Ernie Bryan. It was one thing to be a nudist yourself; it was another to bring your wife and your pre-adolescent daughter and your small son to one of these places and let them run around in their skin too. It took the courage of your convictions to let strangers look upon your family's nakedness that way.

The tennis courts were down to the left of the waterfront area. There were two clay courts, with a third one somewhat further away. The isolated court was taken, I saw, and so was one of the two

courts at hand. We moved out onto the vacant court, and Bonnie opened a can of balls and promptly let fly with a serve.

Now, I have played some pretty fair tennis in my life, but not recently. So it was that my first wild swing in return sent the ball flying far above Bonnie's head and over the wire fence for a home run. Bonnie turned, watching the ball go bouncing out onto the basketball court and come to rest there. The tennis court exit was on her side of the net, so she shouted, "I'll get it!" and sprinted off.

While I was waiting for her to get the ball and return, I glanced at the other court. The players there were the middle-aged man named Norman Keyes, and the pretty young redheaded waitress whose name I did not know. They seemed about an even match. Keyes obviously knew the technique of the game, but he was short of leg and short of breath, and so he was not particularly effective. The redhead, on the other hand, barely knew which way to hold her racquet, but she was lithe and agile, and her advantage of stamina cancelled out Keyes' advantage of skill and fairly well evened things out.

One thing that you can discover virtually for the first time in a nudist camp is the loveliness of the female musculature. A bathing suit leaves only the arms and legs and shoulders of a girl exposed, thus making it impossible for you to see the lovely way the muscles ripple along a girl's back when she serves a tennis ball, or the way her buttocks go tight when she bends to sock back a low one. Of course, the girl has to be reasonably athletic to begin with. But if she is, the sight of her rippling

muscles adds an entire new dimension, a quite unexpected one, to sex appeal.

I watched that redhead while waiting for Bonnie, and an idea took shape.

The redhead was far from unattractive. She was perhaps twenty years old, and was about five feet in height, and was nicely built. Medium breasts, narrow waist, nice hips, excellent legs. And those lovely muscles rippling in her back and buttocks. What's more, she didn't seem to be spoken for—Keyes didn't appear to have any proprietary rights on her—and so I could assume she was available until I learned otherwise.

And, all things considered, I figured I would rather be mixed up with a nice, healthy chick like the waitress than with a passionate but whacked-up female like Bonnie. And the best way to get rid of Bonnie was to transfer my affections visibly to some other female.

Fast. Before Bonnie got the idea she owned me.

Bonnie came back with the tennis ball and started to go into a serve motion, but I was facing the wrong way, watching the neat way the redhead's high pointed breasts lifted as she brought the racquet around. Bonnie yelled out to me pretty annoyedly, and I returned my attention to her.

We volleyed for five or ten minutes, and then I turned to the pair on the other court and said. "Hey! How about a game of mixed doubles?"

Bonnie looked sour, but both Keyes and the redhead thought it was a fine idea. Keyes was down at the far end of the court, Bonnie's end, and so I

maneuvered it that he and Bonnie would be partners, and the redhead and I. She came jogging over—*bounce-bounce-bounce* went the bosom, and as she came close I realized that what I had thought was a solid tan was actually a mass of extremely tight-packed freckles covering her entire body. She even had freckles on her breasts.

"Hi," I said. "My name's Al Fieldston."

"Harriet Cross," she said. She leaned on her racquet and caught her breath. She had been running around a lot in the game with Keyes, and her freckled skin was glossy with sweat, and I saw shiny little beadlets between her breasts.

Down at her end of the court, Bonnie was getting very very bleak-looking. I guess she figured out what was going to happen, and she didn't like it.

We volleyed back and forth for a while, getting the feel of a doubles match, and then we volleyed for serve. One, two, three over the net, and then Bonnie rammed one viciously past Harriet and they had the serve.

Harriet was something of a weak link on our side, as was Keyes over there. We began playing more and more seriously with each point. With Keyes serving, they got up to 30-love; we caught them; they went ahead, and finally took the first game.

They took the second game, too, and the third. But I got the hang of serving in the fourth and surprised them all by slapping a bunch of bullets down where they couldn't even reach them. We took the fifth game, too, and now the set stood 2-3, and

it was taking on the aspects of a grudge match. Every time we made a point, I would pat Harriet affectionately on the shoulder, or sometimes a little lower. Bonnie was stewing. She knew she was being dumped in favor of the redhead.

In the sixth game something happened which might seem funny in the retelling, but which does not seem funny to me because of the strange consequences it was to have. The score stood at 30-all. Keyes was serving, and we were desperately trying to pick up the next couple of points and tie the set.

Harriet was playing in close to the net, and I was back near the base-line. Bonnie dropped a soft lob right in the middle. I came rushing in from the back of the court, determined to powder the ball right down Keyes' throat and put us one up.

But just as I brought my racquet around in a vicious swing, Harriet cut in front of me unexpectedly to take the ball. She banged it into the net—and at the same instant, unable to check my swing, I sent my racquet crashing with a loud *crack!* right into what would have been the seat of the redhead's pants, if she had happened to be wearing any pants.

She dropped her racquet and let out a little gasp of surprise and pain, and the force of the blow knocked her sprawling on her knees. There's always something funny about a swat in the pants, but I knew I had swung to kill, and I knew I had hurt her. As she kneeled there, I could actually see the imprint of my strings on her freckled buttocks. Her rear was up in the air facing me, and it looked like she'd been sitting on a hot waffle-iron.

I rushed over to her and helped her to her

feet and muttered apologies, even though it had been mostly her fault. "Are you hurt?" I asked.

She turned. There were tears in her eyes, but she was smiling. "I'll be okay."

And I saw the expression on her face.

Remember the come-hither look that Sandra Richards gave me when I was at her folks' house for my interview? This was the same look raised to the fifth power. It was a sizzling look of pure desire. It was a look of hungry longing. Harriet was asking me with her eyes to throw her down on the rough clay and take her right there, on the spot.

It was one hell of a look.

I suppose my brain wasn't working too well, or I would have connected the intensity of that look with the intensity of the wallop I had given her. But I just didn't make the obvious connection, even when it was staring me in the face.

Instead I gently stroked her buttocks a couple of times, soothingly. The skin was like satin. I muttered some more apologies. By this time Bonnie and Keyes were coming around the net, looking worried.

Harriet picked up her racquet, brushed the dirt off her knees and the palms of her hands, and walked around a little bit. She wasn't badly hurt. My racquet had nipped her in the best-padded part of her body, and the only harm was the sudden stinging pain of impact. The waffle-iron effect was fading, though her rear still had a reddened, sore look about it.

She insisted she was okay, and we got the game

going again. But the look she had given me bothered me. I told myself I had better slow down. This was only my first full day in the Sunland Health Colony, and already I had made passes at two girls, been laid by a third, and now was in the process of getting involved with a fourth. At this rate it was going to be a strenuous three months.

I couldn't keep my mind on the game, and Bonnie and Keyes easily polished us off for the final point and the set. They were all keen on playing another set, but I begged off. Harriet, too, didn't seem very enthusiastic. She was still sore in the rear, and wanted to dunk herself in the lake.

She started off toward the water. I began to follow her. Bonnie caught up with me. Now she looked a lot closer to forty than thirty.

"Let's play a game of singles," she said.

"I'd rather not. I'm not in shape for too much of this stuff."

"Besides which, you'd rather go swimming with Harriet than play tennis with me."

"Bonnie, look—"

"I *am* looking. I've seen you looking at that girl since we came down here. I saw the way you patted her fanny after you hit her."

"You've got no right to be jealous," I told her. "Harriet's a fine girl, and I like her."

"What about me?" It was practically a wail.

I didn't have to pretend to be annoyed. "We've had our little interlude, Bonnie. What did you think it was—the beginning of a grand romance?"

"We were so good together," she sobbed. The bulging eyes had the look of defeat.

"It was grand, Bonnie. But I'm not here to get entangled with anybody. I value my freedom. And I think it's best that I make things clear to you right now. Our little episode at lunchtime is *not* the prelude to a long affair."

"But I want you so much, Al!"

"You see? I don't want to be wanted. Let's be sophisticated, Bonnie. We can make love now and then, when we've got the craving. But let's not try to monopolize each other, shall we? Let's be free agents. Will you excuse me now? I'd like to go swimming."

I gave her Ernie Bryan's tennis racquet and left her standing there, looking dumfounded. I trotted down to the water. Harriet was already in, floating on her back. Nothing was above the water except her breasts and toes and nose. I dove in and came up near her.

"How's the backside?" I asked.

"I'm going to be black and blue tomorrow. Everyone will ask questions."

"So tell them," I said. She laughed. We swam out to the deep water together. We were bobbing out there, and suddenly she swam up against me, pressing her body against mine in the water. The sharp points of her breasts jabbed into my skin, and her legs wrapped themselves around my body, and she took my hands and put them on her buttocks and made me squeeze tight. Wrapped up like that, we sank below the water and hovered just beneath the surface until we started running out of breath. We separated and popped to the surface. She had a slit-eyed, excited look about her. I sup-

pose what she wanted was to have me make love to her right there in the water. But the combination of the cold water and the bout with Bonnie only a few hours earlier, plus the fact that there were about a dozen swimmers less than a hundred yards away, left me in a state of inability to gratify her desire on the spot.

We laughed and swam in to shore, and sprawled out, dripping wet, on the grass near the basketball court. We talked for a while. She was twenty-two, she said—which made her a couple of years older than she looked—and she had just graduated from a nearby teacher's college. She was going to start teaching in the fall, and this was her vacation. She loved outdoor life, sports, camping, stuff like that.

"How'd you get interested in nudism?" I asked her.

She giggled. "I came here as a guest last year. A fellow I was dating was a member, and he talked me into coming up. At first I was so embarrassed I didn't know where to hide. But finally I got up enough nerve to take my clothes off and come out of the cabin. And after half an hour I discovered it doesn't really matter. I mean, we shouldn't have inhibitions about nakedness."

"No, we shouldn't."

"So I was up here a couple of weeks and really got to love the life. And this year I wanted to come back. I didn't have any money, so I applied for a job as a waitress. It's only a few hours' work a day, and all the rest of the time I'm free to use the facilities."

"What about the boyfriend?"

"Oh, I stopped seeing him a long time ago. He isn't a member of the colony any more, either." She smiled coquettishly. "Now tell me about yourself, Al."

So I told her, giving her the usual routine about the advertising rat-race and how I had come up here seeking rustic simplicity as a backdrop for writing my novel. She was impressed. We talked on and on, and then all of a sudden it was five in the afternoon and she had to hurry to the mess hall to get the tables set up for dinner.

I walked her part of the way back up front. She drew me off into a little sheltered nook near the mess hall and we kissed quickly. It had to be quick, because a public embrace violated the decency regulations of the camp, and she could get fired if anyone caught her and complained. But she thrust herself up against me, rubbing against me, thrusting her breasts into my not unwilling hands. We kissed briefly and then she was gone, running gracefully toward the mess hall like some wood sprite, with her shimmering red hair bobbing in the air as she ran.

I found that this time I had become somewhat aroused. I had to remain in the nook for a couple of moments while my excitement subsided and I became fit to go into public again.

I strolled back down the road that led from the mess hall to the cabins. The air was growing cooler, and I was wondering whether or not it would be necessary to dress for dinner.

I was just about to go back to my cabin when I heard a "Yoo-hoo, Al!" cry, and saw Joanie Baker

come jogging toward me. I waited, watching the ever-fascinating action of her breasts as she ran.

She caught up. "I see you took my advice about Bonnie," she said.

"How do you know so fast?"

Joanie smiled. "Bonnie just complained to me about you. She said you offended her by engaging in an indecent action with Harriet Cross on the tennis court. If Bonnie's out to get your scalp so fast, it means you must have told her off."

"I did," I said. "But what about this complaint?"

"Oh, we never take Bonnie's complaints seriously. We know it's always a case of jealously. She says you were patting Harriet's bottom on the tennis court. Dr. Richards feels that there shouldn't be any public personal contact between the sexes here, and I agree with him. Were you actually doing what Bonnie said you were?"

I grinned. "Bonnie didn't tell you the full story. Harriet and I were playing mixed doubles and she got in the way of my racquet. I caught her on the rear end so hard I knocked her down. I thought she was hurt, and all I did was pick her up and pat her once or twice to take the sting out."

"The way Bonnie had it, you were all set to rape the girl on the court," Joanie said. "Well, naturally there won't be any action taken against you. I wish Dr. Richards would bring himself to throw Bonnie out. She causes more conflict around here every year, with her spites and jealousies—"

"She's a sick woman," I said solemnly. "Dr. Richards is being kind to her."

"Dr. Richards is kind to everybody. *Too* kind. Well, thank goodness he's coming up here tomorrow. I'm tired of being responsible for everything around here." She smiled cheerfully. "Better bring a sweater with you tonight at dinner time. It gets rather chilly here sometimes in June."

"Thanks," I said.

But she was already gone, striding from me in her long-legged masculine step. She looked like an Amazon, or a lady Viking, with her blonde hair and her magnificent animal body. Once again, I sighed. It was cruel and unusual torture for a girl as beautiful as Joanie to go striding around the place with all her glorious skin exposed, and for her to be as unapproachable as she was. *What a waste,* I thought. *What a lousy waste of good womanflesh.*

I headed back to my cabin to wait for the dinner gong.

CHAPTER SIX

JOANIE WAS RIGHT ABOUT THE WEATHER. It was quite brisk by dinnertime. Feeling somewhat foolish, I went up to the mess hall wearing a polo shirt and nothing else. Joanie had donned her sweater again. A couple of the thinner-blooded ones were more fully dressed. Nearly everyone had something on, and generally the effect was a startling and interesting one.

The program for that evening was, Joanie announced, Twenty Questions. Everyone who was interested was to gather in the Social Hall about half past seven.

I went over, but I didn't stay long. It's been a long time since party games of that sort have held the slightest appeal for me. Not even the interest added to the gathering by the semi-nudity of the players could keep me from getting hopelessly bored. Bonnie was there, besides, and she kept looking longingly in my direction, her expression alternating between black hatred and hopeful pleading.

I waited until she became a member of the panel, and took advantage of the moment to slip out of the Social Hall. Bonnie couldn't very well leave the game and follow me.

I stood on the back porch of the building for a moment, shivering slightly in the evening breeze. Night had fallen, but the moon was out and lit the place up somewhat. The sky was clear and dark.

with sharp stars glinting away. I was pleased to see a shooting star. You don't see them much in the Chicago sky.

Meehan had disappeared right after supper with a girl named Margaret something, a skittish and plump spinster just on the wrong side of thirty. Meehan, a smart operator if there ever was one, had probably spotted Margaret for an easy lay without complications, and was off making hay with her at the moment. I knew he was really leching after Joanie Baker—what man with two eyes in his head wouldn't be?—but Jack was enough of a realist to know that Joanie wasn't likely to come across. So he was off with Margaret. I thought for a few moments about the *mores* of the nudist camp. People were touchy, in some respects, of course. But in others, I saw, sex was a lot freer and easier here, as you might expect.

For one thing, the absence of clothes made a spontaneous act a lot simpler. Ordinarily you can be with a girl and start petting a little and getting her warmed up, but then you start digging down through blouses and bras and skirts and slips and corsets and whatnot, and by the time you finish getting the armor off she's had time for a few second thoughts and you don't score. But that obstruction was no problem here. Once you could get a girl interested in you here, all the intervening barriers of cloth did not trouble you. You could get your hand on her bare skin and start working her up, and then it was the simplest thing in the world to make love to her before she had a chance to think things over.

With that big barrier out of the way—clothes—life was a lot simpler. A lot of girls will give you a "No" because they're afraid you'll find out about the birthmark they've got on their hip, or because they don't want you to find out they wear falsies. But there was nothing to hide here. Modesty was no longer a drawback to making out.

On the other hand, you had to consider that constant exposure to nudity took away a lot of novelty and suspense. On at least four occasions in my life I had seduced women for the prime purpose of finding out whether they looked as good without their clothes as with them. (In three out of the four, they didn't.) That motive was absent here. You didn't have to make a girl in order to find out whether the stuff in her bra was real or rubber. All you had to do was take a look the next time you met her.

And so—they told me—after a few weeks a naked girl becomes a boring thing, and what really lights you up is one with clothes on. I was willing to believe that. But so far I hadn't noticed myself growing jaded. No doubt Joanie Baker would have looked fascinating fully dressed, but she looked plenty good the way she was.

End of philosophical disquisition. There's nothing like making a drastic change in your environment for setting yourself reflecting about the basic matters of your personality. Such as your reactions to naked women.

But right now I found myself wondering about Harriet.

The waitresses were supposed to help clean up

the mess hall after dinner. But that took only about forty minutes, and more than an hour had gone by since the end of the meal. I wondered where she was. I surprised myself by feeling a pang of jealousy, and I discovered that I was beginning to think possessively of Harriet already. I wanted to know where she was, and I was subconsciously annoyed at the idea of her walking around naked.

I went into the mess hall. The lights were out in front, but I went around back and into the kitchen. The scene in there was strange. A potbellied man wearing only a chef's tall hat was bustling around tidying things up. Nick Riccio, completely naked, was helping him. Two fellows in polo shirts were scrubbing dishes, and Lorraine, the brunette waitress, was helping them. She was naked. Everyone turned around and looked rather coldly at me as I walked in.

I felt flustered. But I kept control and said, "I'm looking for Harriet."

Lorraine said, "She just finished here. She went over to the Social Hall to look for you."

Thanking her, I beat a quick retreat. I didn't want to be around Riccio any more than I had to, after our little set-to in the morning. I hurried back to the Social Hall, where Twenty Questions was still going strong, and I found Harriet standing on the front porch, peering in puzzledly. I tiptoed up behind her and slipped my hands over her breasts.

She whirled. "Oh—Al!"

"Who did you think?"

"You mustn't do that. There are rules about intimate caresses in public."

"Let's caress in private, then."

She grinned at me. Taking me by the hand, she led me away from the Social Hall. We walked hand in hand past the mess hall and I found myself on a road that was new to me.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"Staff quarters." She pointed ahead, to three or four cabins nestling at the edge of the woods behind the mess hall. "That's pretty private. Lorraine and I share a cabin. But she usually spends the night with Nick at his place. That's where the cooks sleep, over there."

My heart was pounding. Back in the real world, when you want to go to bed with a girl you have to wine her and dine her for a while, usually. You have to take her to a couple of shows, and you have to feed her the line about how the bomb may drop any week and why not grab some fun while you can? Then, and only then, she lets you score. But that was the real world. Here in the fantasy dreamland of the Sunland Health Colony, the pretenses and conventions of society didn't seem to matter so much. If you met a girl and she liked you, she took you off to her cabin or she came to yours. And since neither of you had any clothing on anyway, it was a perfectly expectable thing for matters to go on to what they call completion.

We entered her cabin. It was built exactly like the one Meehan and I shared. Harriet took me into her room and locked the door. She was wearing a pair of shorts, and she took them off. She was naked now. I wriggled out of my shirt.

I saw the look in her eyes again, the smoulder-

ing, sensuous look she had given me on the tennis court. She flattened herself against me, thrusting her knee between my thighs, while my hands squeezed the flesh of her buttocks. I felt her small but finely shaped breasts going stiff and hard, pressing against my chest.

Her tongue darted into my mouth and her knee brought me to a flaming pitch of excitement and my hands went up from her buttocks and forced themselves between our bodies, reaching upward until I was cupping her breasts. They weren't big swinging breasts like Bonnie's, and they weren't monumental statuesque ones like Joanie's. They were—well, they filled my hands nicely, and I squeezed the stiff little berries at the tips, and I heard Harriet gasp with delight and I told myself that the Sunland Health Colony was the nearest thing to utopia on earth that had yet been invented.

Then Harriet pulled herself away from me and while I stood blinking and recovering from the intensity of the kiss she went to her dresser and opened a drawer. When she turned around again she was holding—this is God's own truth—a ping-pong paddle!

It was one just like the ones they had in the back of the Social Hall, covered with a flat oval of red rubber raised up in little puckers. She thrust the paddle into my hand and I stood there staring at it stupidly while she whispered, "Hit me, Al! Hit me!"

I didn't get it at first. Call me stupid or something. But Harriet pushed me down on the bed and dove across my knees, face down, with her pretty

little butt facing upward so I could still make out the imprint my tennis racquet had left this afternoon.

And all of a sudden I understood Harriet a whole lot better.

I knew now why she had given me that look of pure three hundred proof s-e-x after I had whammed her with my racquet.

She was a girl who *liked* to be hurt.

That was the way she got her kicks.

All at once my image of her as a nice clean-cut college girl who worked at a nudist colony because she enjoyed the outdoor life went up in smoke. I felt faintly queasy. I'm not really as puritanical as this account is probably painting me, but still and all I've always had a preference for girls who went for the straight stuff instead of sidelines and specialties.

I didn't have any choice, though. There I was with the ping-pong paddle in my hand and a naked girl spread out across my lap with her backside waiting to be paddled, and myself in a state of advanced excitement anyway. So—feeling somewhat guilty about the whole thing—I lifted the paddle and brought it down smartly across Harriet's tender rump.

She let out a squeal of delight. I saw the skin almost tingle. I paddled her again, making a nice loud sound, and she kicked her legs and began to pant hysterically, and I found myself getting into the spirit of the thing myself. I brought the paddle down four or five more times across her bare bottom, and every time the paddle landed she let out another cry of mixed pleasure and pain. *Whack! Whack! Whack!* And Harriet getting hotter with

each descent of the paddle across her bare bottom.

She sat up suddenly, and her eyes were wild. She looked like she was a madwoman. "Hit me," she moaned. "Slap me, punch me, bite me!" She wriggled up until she was sitting on my lap, and in one sudden thrust of her loins she imprisoned me with her body, and she pulled my head to her bosom and shoved one of her breasts into my mouth and murmured, "Bite me, bite me . . ."

I was carried away by it all. I took care not to break the skin, but I gave her what she wanted. She moaned and bucked and whimpered, and sweat bathed our bodies, and it went on and on, seemingly for hours. She was really the wildest.

And then she was digging her nails into my back and moving with frantic energy, and I felt the trip-hammer pounding in my loins and I let my breath out in a long hoarse sigh and it was all over. I opened my eyes. Harriet still sat astride me, but she looked completely exhausted. She tumbled off, landing in a little heap on the floor. I picked her up. She was limp, drained, through. I put her on the bed. She gave a kittenish smile of contentment.

She said in a low voice, "Thanks, Al."

I sat on the edge of the bed and stared at my toes. It had been one hell of a weird day. I had had a woman ask me what time it was two minutes after making love to her, and now a girl had *thanked* me for giving her the sort of perverse thrills she craved. The ping-pong paddle lay on the floor. I scowled at it.

Harriet opened her eyes. They were wet with tears, tears of mingled pleasure and pain. I got up,

found a pack of cigarettes on her dresser, took one out and lit it up.

She said, "What's wrong, Al?"

"I shrugged. "Nothing."

"You're upset."

"Maybe I am."

"I'm sorry, Al. I can't help myself. It's . . . it's the way I am. I have to be in pain or I can't enjoy it. I don't know why. But I need the paddling. Otherwise it's no good for me." There was a pathetic quavery note in her voice. I looked at her—twenty-two and already loused up with some creepy kind of perversion—and I felt deep pity, and a bit of disgust too.

"How long have you been this way?" I asked.

She shrugged. "I don't know. It was sort of an accident." She sprawled out facing the wall. I saw the angry redness of her buttocks and felt guilt for having contributed to her strange lust. In a low voice she said, "I was eighteen the first time I slept with a boy. It was the usual story—too much to drink, and a fellow with a fast line. Well, at least it didn't hurt any. I didn't feel a thing. Not a thing. He took my panties down and did it to me, and then when he was through he zipped up his trousers and that was it. I was disappointed. I went out with him a few more times and I let him do it again, and each time it was the same thing. I didn't feel a thing. He told me I was just nervous, that pretty soon I'd start enjoying it."

I puffed on my cigarette. I couldn't take my eyes off her reddened buttocks.

She went on, "I guess I slept around a lot in

the next couple of years. Almost the same story. Frigid, that's what I was. And then I met this guy. He was maybe thirty, and he had a lot of money, and he took me to fancy places. He wanted to make love, and I figured it was the least I could give him in return for all the money he was spending on me. It didn't mean anything to me, you see, and if it made *him* happy—well, we went to his place, and we got undressed, and we made it. Nothing. Cold as a fish, like always. I broke down and spilled out my whole long sad story. He listened to the whole thing and then all of a sudden he slapped me, out of nowhere, right across my breasts. I thought he was out of his mind. Then he turned me over his knee and started spanking me. I kicked and screamed and tried to get loose, but he held me tight, and then I felt something happening inside me. My heart started racing and I felt hot all over and he took me in his arms and we did it again and this time I felt it. So that's how it was. He got through to me."

"And you're only satisfied when you get hurt?" I asked, fascinated and appalled at the same time.

She nodded miserably. "Yes. He—stopped seeing me after a while. He married someone else. I went with other fellows, and when I slept with them nothing happened unless I could get them to smack me. Today—when you hit me with the racquet—you came practically near blowing all my fuses. I wanted you, Al. Right there on the tennis court. Only they would have thrown us both out of here if we did anything like that."

I stubbed out my cigarette. "You poor kid."

She swung around to face me. "Al, what am I

going to do? I want to be normal! I don't want to bring men to my room and give them a ping-pong paddle to use!"

"Have you been to a psychiatrist?"

"Yes. It didn't do any good." She began to sob. I went over to her and slipped my arms around her, and she cried it all out.

A hell of a crazy place, I thought. Despite all Dr. Richards' propaganda about nudists being saner than other people, I wasn't impressed. One day in Sunland Health Colony and I had become involved with a nympho and a masochist. And there was the enigma of the apparently sexless Joanie Baker besides.

A nice bunch of people . . .

I comforted Harriet for a while, telling her everything was going to turn out all right for her, that someday a fellow would come along who could ring the bell for her without the violent preliminaries. I didn't believe it, and I don't think she did either, but at least my talking that way made us both feel better.

Around eleven I decided it was time to get back to my cabin. Harriet held me tight at the door, and we hugged, our naked bodies pressing together.

"I hope we'll be together again soon," she said.

"I hope so."

"You don't want to," she said. "You're not happy about it."

"It takes a while to get used to," I said. I stroked her satiny buttocks affectionately. "Good night, Harriet. Sleep well."

"'Night, Al."

I unlocked the door and stepped outside, my shirt over my arm. Once again I was obsessed with the unreality of the nudist camp environment. To go into a girl's bedroom and make love with her, and then to walk out stark naked and stroll home—that was grotesque, almost nightmarish.

I walked along. Glancing to my left, I saw two figures on the porch of the cook's cabin. Riccio and Lorraine. He was sitting on the top step, and she was sitting a step below him, leaning back, and his hands were on her breasts. I looked away quickly and kept walking.

In a few minutes I was out of the staff area and past the mess hall, on my way back down below to the cabins. The camp was quiet. Early to bed, early to rise was the rule here. I came down the road and stood for a moment in the middle of everything, in the calm, quiet night. Lights were on in three or four of the cabins. To my right, in Cabin Four, I heard the creak of bedsprings, and thought that healthy, cleancut Ernie Bryan was having a healthy, cleancut time in bed with his wife. A light was on in Cabin Two, Joanie Baker's cabin, as well. I walked quickly down to my own cabin.

Meehan's door was open, and the light was on. He was sitting up in bed, scribbling shorthand notes in his book. He nodded as I came in.

"Have a good evening?" I asked.

"I scored," he said. "One for one is par for the course."

"Margaret?"

"Naturally. She was so damn pathetically *grateful*. How'd you spend your evening?"

I told him, in some detail. He listened with a growing frown. When I finished I said, "How'd you pick this place out, anyway?"

"Friend of mine told me."

"It's really Bugsville, isn't it?"

He shrugged. "Just because one funloving sunlover is a nympho and another a masochist?"

"Jack, *all* these people are screwy."

"Sure they are. They wouldn't be running around in their birthday suits if they were ordinary people."

"It's going to be a long three months," I said.

"Not for you. I figure you'll be in a rest home inside of a month, Al. One before lunch and one after supper is fun for a while. But you gotta show moderation, man. Don't run hog-wild just because there's a lot of bare tail floating around."

I shrugged. "I never did learn how to say no to a girl who wanted to go to bed with me," I said. "Guess I'd better start practicing."

"Guess you'd better."

"Goodnight," I said.

"Goodnight, kid. Sleep tight."

I didn't have to worry about that. I staggered off toward my pad and dropped wearily into bed. It had been quite a day. Quite. It seemed to be at least fifty hours long. I shut my eyes and sleep descended like a closing window.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE NEXT DAY, LUCKILY, wasn't quite so hectic.

It started off on the cool and cloudy side. I woke up when the breakfast gong sounded and went out onto the porch, but came scuttling back inside at once. It was around fifty degrees out there, and breezy. I woke Meehan up and we went to breakfast in clothing that would have passed muster at any resort. Nearly everybody else was well covered, too, both top and bottom. Lorraine and Harriet wore sweaters and little aprons as they served breakfast. I had an extra portion of hot cereal, to take off some of the chill. Harriet served me, favoring me with a little knowing smile. As for Bonnie, she was away at the other end of the long table, and I tried not to look in her direction. Hell hath no fury, etc. I wanted to keep far away from her.

The sun was just beginning to fight its way through the clouds as we returned to our cabin after breakfast. But there was still a nip in the air. It wasn't exactly an outdoorsy kind of morning. We got the cabin in order, and then Jack left. He said he was heading up front, to the colony library. He wanted to consult the back files of the nudist journals they had there, to get some historical info for the book he would be writing eventually. As soon as he was gone, I set up the typewriter in the cabin and dragged out my manuscript.

I read through the outline again and decided I was heading in the right direction. Rolling a fresh

sheet of paper into the typewriter, I began to type. This time, I was doing an expansion of the original outline, filling in the small details—character names, background data, chronology, and such. It was an exciting thing to see the texture of the imaginary world I was creating become more solid with each tap of the keps. Pretty soon I would be able to move around in the world of my characters as easily as though it were my own. Then I would be ready to begin writing the book.

I hardly noticed the time going by. After a while I became thirsty, and on my way to the sink I noticed that the time was eleven o'clock. So I had been working about two hours. It seemed like a lot less. And in those two hours I had turned three pages of my old outline into about ten pages of the new one. I had been typing along at full speed, hardly able to keep up with the flow of my ideas.

Deciding it was time for a little break, I walked out onto the front porch. The sun was definitely out, now, and the temperature was rising at a fast clip —it was at least in the middle sixties by now, and by the afternoon the sun would be fierce again. I was still wearing the clothes I had worn to breakfast, and I began to get uncomfortable in them.

I looked out at the big lawn, surrounded by the wide semicircle of cabins. Nude men and women were lolling on blankets in the grass. A naked boy of about eleven was playing catch with young Janey Bryan. Further down, a volleyball game was going on, with about five people on each side. They were really banging the ball back and forth enthusiastically.

It was the most peaceful sight you could imagine.

It looked like a scene out of an old painting. This was the Elysian Field, the Happy Hunting-Ground.

I decided that I had been a little harsh the night before. Most of these people weren't cranks or lunatics. In fact, they were mostly a hell of a lot saner than the people outside.

There were exceptions, like Bonnie, like Harriet—people with problems. But most of the nudists here were a different breed. Utterly relaxed, utterly without the silly clutter of inhibitions that most of us drag around with us. Most of the nudists were people like Ernie Bryan, I realized. Sane, healthy, uncomplicated. I was willing to bet Ernie Bryan was faithful to his wife, had always been, would always be. Why shouldn't he? He had no filthy little repressed curiosities about other women. Everything was right out in the open.

And these nudist kids, I thought. They wouldn't grow into teenage sex addicts. They wouldn't hover around trying to peep into the girls' washroom. They wouldn't be customers for the sleazy unshaven characters who hang around high schools trying to sell the kids packets of little glossy prints of naked men and women. They wouldn't have any interest in burlesque shows, strippers, nightclub comics. They wouldn't turn into rapists or peeping Toms.

Why should they? Nothing was hidden from them. They weren't throttled with censorship at every step of the way—and so they didn't react to censorship in an exaggerated swing toward the other direction.

I watched the volleyball players for a while, their tanned bodies glistening in the sun, and I

envied them for their many years of this sort of lazy life, this complete freedom. And I thought about all the people in the outside world—the ones who said that nudists were crazy cranks—and I wondered who the crazy ones really were. These unfettered naked people, or the ones who crept around the hellish murk of summertime Chicago swathed in underwear and shirts and suits and neckties?

Turning, I went back into the cabin and peeled off my clothes. I dragged the typing table out on the front porch to soak up some sunlight while I worked.

I put in another half hour's worth, two more pages, and then I decided to call it a morning. I was starting to get tired of working, and I resolved to quit whenever the book became a chore instead of a pleasure. I carefully put the new pages in the folder and closed everything up. Then I went for a stroll, reveling in my nudity.

I wandered over to the volleyball court first, and stood watching the game. Joanie Baker was the captain of one team, Ernie Bryan of the other. They faced each other across the net, faces set in grim determination as though this were the World Series with twenty million people glued to their television sets to watch. Bess Olin served from backcourt. Norman Keyes tapped the ball forward, a soft high lob, and Joanie went high, her breasts rising steeply and every muscle in her spectacular body standing out in sharp relief as she slammed the ball across the net and straight down. Everybody on both teams cheered as the ball touched ground for the point.

Then Keyes served. Don Riemann set it up for Ernie Bryan, who spiked it, but some chap I didn't

know made a miraculous save. He popped it up in the air; Joanie knocked it over the net, but Ernie took it and spiked it again, this time slamming it down with a fierce leap. The ball caromed off Joanie's back and bounced off the court for a point. While they chased it, Joanie asked me if I wanted to play. But I begged off; the sides were even and evenly matched, and the offer had obviously been made only for the sake of politeness.

Instead I drifted on toward the lake. The only one swimming was Margaret, Meehan's amour of the night before, who was going round and round in a solemn breast-stroke. She waved to me as I trotted out onto the dock.

"Hi! Where's Jack?"

"In the library," I told her. "He's doing some research for his article."

"He's missing a good swim," she said. "The water's grand."

I dove in and surfaced next to Margaret. She was floating on her back, now, and her big, soft breasts seemed to hold her up like water wings. She had a pale, pasty look that no amount of exposure to the sun would ever erase. There was something cow-like about her. But she was a sweet sort, and I could tell she had long since resigned herself to spinsterhood and was determined to grab whatever adventure she could before subsiding into middle age. Hence her foray into nudism, and hence her willingness to be slept with. There wasn't much point in a girl like that saving her virginity for the wedding night everyone knew would never come.

I swam around for a while, until the distant

tinkling of the lunch gong brought the swim to an end. Margaret clambered out of the water first. She paused for breath on the ladder, and I resisted the impulse to shove my hands against her buttocks and push. Instead I waited beneath her in a gentlemanly way, modestly averting my eyes from the enormous expanse of *derriere* looming above me.

I toweled dry and started up the road. Another good thing about nudist life is that you can just pop in and out of the water any time you feel like it, without going to any bother about changing in or out of swimsuits. You just kicked your sandals off and jumped in, and toweled dry when you came out.

And at the athletic fields you didn't have to worry about getting sweated up and needing a change of clothing before lunch. There were outdoor showers mounted at every game area. When the lunch gong rang, you simply stepped under the shower, rinsed off the sweat of your exertions, and headed up front to the mess hall. Simple and efficient, all right.

The volleyball players were queuing up at their shower now. Margaret went into her cabin to rearrange her hair before eating. Alone, I strolled up toward the mess hall, feeling completely relaxed, completely uninhibited, completely at home in the nudist world. It seemed the most natural thing in the world to be walking around without any clothes on. For the life of me, I couldn't imagine why anyone in the outside world would have any hesitations at all about nudism.

The sun was warm. My skin was tanning rapidly, and seemed to tingle with vitality. I felt more completely alive than I had in decades. I whistled

a little tune as I walked.

And then, in a moment, I was plunged into complete confusion again.

There is a little rise in the road midway between the cabin area and the mess hall. A person coming up from the cabins is partially hidden from someone coming the other way, until they both get to the top of the rise. I was walking along without paying any particular attention to the road in front of me. All of a sudden I heard a deep but youthful feminine voice call out, "*Hello*, there."

I looked up in surprise from my relaxed reveries. "Hello," I said automatically.

And then I felt like making a dash for the underbrush.

Sandra Richards stood in front of me. She was fully dressed. She wore a tight sweater through which her breasts protruded like two burgeoning hills, and a skirt that molded the lush contours of her hips and buttocks. She was wearing lipstick and earrings and stockings. She looked like she was on her way downtown for a shopping expedition at one of the big stores.

And she was staring at my mid-section with frank and intimate curiosity.

It was one thing to wander around in a camp full of equally nude people. You get used to the idea quickly that way. Nobody has any advantages over anyone else, and so there's no sense of embarrassment.

But it's a totally different thing to find yourself confronted suddenly with a full-breasted young lady, herself dressed to kill and yourself mother-bare.

That's when you discover the difference between being nude and naked. A *nude* man was what I had been a moment before, strolling along in cheerful unencumberedness. A *naked* man was what I had abruptly become—with the overwhelming desire to crouch down and shield my loins with my hands, to keep them hidden from this girl's inquiring gaze.

I fought back the impulse to hide myself. I stood my ground and even put my hands on my hips and widened my stance, as though ready for conversation. While within I trembled with embarrassment and shame.

Sandra said, "We just got here five minutes ago. I was on my way down to my cabin to get undressed. Do you want to come with me?"

I scowled. "Think it'll take long? I don't want to be late for lunch."

"Oh, it'll just be a minute. Come on, walk along with me," she ordered petulantly, once again giving my body that brazen once-over with her eyes.

I decided to see it through. I did an about-face and headed back toward the cabin area with her, walking at her side. I was tremendously uncomfortable about the whole thing. Her body, masked by her clothing, had a sensuous appeal that not even Joanie Baker could arouse in me. It was the element of mystery that was responsible. A fully dressed woman in a nudist colony is practically an invitation to rape. It's on the same order—maybe even worse—than a naked woman in outside society, walking down the street or getting on a bus.

Sandra said, "Are you having a good time here so far?"

"Fine," I said. "It's a wonderful life."

"Yes, we think so too. Where's your friend Mr. Meehan?"

"In the library doing research," I said. I kept my eyes straight ahead, wishing that this insufferably voluptuous and amoral teenager would do the same. But she kept looking at me.

We began to pass the volleyball players as they headed up for lunch. Sandra smiled and greeted everybody by name. Nobody seemed perturbed at the fact that I was with Sandra, or that she was fully dressed while no one else was. After the volleyball group came Bonnie Carter and a youngish man I didn't know. Seeing the two of us together, Bonnie gave me a look of black hatred.

The Richardses lived in Cabin One, which was at the exact center of the semi-circle, by the flagpole. It was slightly larger than the other cabins, since it belonged to the director and was a kind of meeting-place as well as a dwelling. We went up on the porch. I hesitated there. Sandra looked at me, pouting.

"Come on in, silly."

"Maybe I'd better wait out here."

"I won't bite," she told me. "Come on."

Shrugging, I went inside. Sandra led me into the left-hand bedroom. I leaned against the door, taking care to keep it open that way. Sandra might have bedtime ideas and I wasn't in a mood to get entangled in another romance so fast. Especially with jailbait.

But apparently all that was on Sandra's mind right now was a bit of exhibitionism. She knew full

well that mere nudity couldn't get a man worked up to anything like the degree that disrobing did.

So she disrobed. I leaned back, trying to be casual, as she pulled her sweater up over her head and tossed it on a chair.

"You don't look like you're thirty-four," she remarked, as she reached around back to unhook her bra. "You look a lot younger."

"I owe it all to clean living," I said. "How did you know my age, anyway?"

"I looked at your questionnaire, of course. But don't tell Daddy. He thinks he keeps them hidden." She had the fastening of her bra open now. Taking her time about it, she eased the straps over her shoulders and let the cups fall away from her breasts. The round heavy globes of flesh thrust forward, maintaining their position without any real opposition from gravity, which spoke of superb pectoral muscles of the Joanie Baker class. Sandra turned, aiming those spectacular breasts straight at me and giving me a full view. The nipples were tiny, but they were standing up stiffly. Her skin was dark, almost olive, and she had a kind of Near Eastern duskiness about her. She was the sort of girl who would be an ornament to someone's harem, I thought.

The sight of a girl fully dressed but with bare breasts is a stimulating one, especially when you've had the numbing exposure to total nudity that I had been having for the past forty-eight hours. Sandra paused devilishly, making silly conversation, and then her hands went to her waist and she started to unzip her skirt

I felt a slow, steady crawling of lust across my

belly. I clenched my jaws. *No.* I told myself, *I will not let myself be aroused by this little slut, I will not, I will not, I will not, I will NOT!*

But I was. It happened slowly, despite my inner objections. Sandra saw it, and a sly smile appeared on her face as she shimmied the skirt over her full hips. She was wearing a half-slip underneath, and that came off too, leaving her clad only in a garter-belt, nylons, and a pair of filmy panties. The panties hid nothing at all. They might just as well have been transparent, because I could plainly see her navel, and, when she turned, the cleft of her full buttocks. She raised one knee and elegantly unhooked her stocking from the garter-belt. The nylon-encased leg was lovely. I felt myself turning red all over at this infuriating strip-tease. I wanted to turn and leave, to get out of here, but I couldn't. I was held fast by the hypnotic sexual magnetism of this lushly-constructed teenager.

"Hurry it up," I barked irritably. "I don't want to be late for lunch."

"We've still got plenty of time. Don't you like to watch me undress, Al?"

I didn't answer. I watched with interest and annoyance as she drew the stockings off, rolled the panties down over her hips and buttocks, and, finally, unhooked the garter belt. She was nude. And I knew that the photo of her that I had seen was out of date, at least a year old and maybe more, because her body had come much more to maturity now. Her heavy breasts promised excitement; her hips and buttocks beckoned.

"Let's go," I said.

"Don't you want to stay a while?"

I backed out the door. "Nix, Sandra. I'm hungry."

"Oh, all right," she said, obviously disgusted with me. She slipped into a pair of sandas and we stepped outside. The moment I was outdoors again, I felt the pressure ease off. My sexual excitement subsided abruptly and I knew I was safe from Sandra, for a while, anyway.

We had gone about thirty yards when we encountered Dr. Richards and his wife, fully dressed, heading for the cabin. Once again I felt the discomfort of being naked in front of people who were dressed —and there was the additional complication that, walking naked at my side, there was the nubile daughter of the man and woman coming toward me. But the Richardses hardly seemed disturbed to meet their daughter naked in the road with a naked man.

Instead they gave us a warm greeting, asked me how I was finding life in Sunland Health Colony, and hurried on to their cabin to get undressed themselves in time for lunch.

When they were gone, Sandra said, "Race you to the mess hall."

Suddenly she was a siren no more, just a bobby-soxer. She broke into a dash, catching me by surprise. I stood flatfooted, watching her buttocks bob as she ran. After she had gone about ten paces she turned, running still, only with her torso twisted to face me, and yelled, "Come on, slowpoke, chase me!"

I remained still, absorbed in the endless miracle of a woman's bouncing breasts, and then I started to run. She set a good pace, but I felt as healthy as a

young satyr, and despite her head start I soon caught up with her. I passed her near the big apple tree where I had kissed Harriet the afternoon before. I came to a dead stop just in front of the mess hall. Sandra ran up behind me, and—probably deliberately—collided with me as I stood there. She wrapped her arms about me to steady herself, and the points of her young breasts stabbed the flesh of my back. I shrugged myself away from her and we went in for lunch.

The mess hall was crowded. There had been at least fifteen new arrivals during the morning, and the long table was completely filled. It had been moved to one side and a second table set up parallel to it. I found a seat at this less occupied table. Sandra slipped in next to me and introduced me to the people sitting there. They were a family group who had just arrived, but who evidently were regular campers here. Ted and Cindy Nichols, they were. Ted Nichols was a cleancut, healthy, Ernie Bryan-like fellow of about thirty, with an open and guileless expression. His wife Cindy was about twenty-five. She had an attractive face and big, elongated breasts which showed signs of having been used for nursing. They had two children, a little girl of just under three and a boy of four and a half.

A new waitress had arrived, too, to handle some of the newcomers. She was a thin, flatchested girl of eighteen or so, heavily freckled and a bit bucktoothy. Her name was Doris, and she seemed like a nice kid.

Dr. and Mrs. Richards arrived and took seats at our table. Everyone who hadn't seen them before waved to them now, and they waved back, like the

King and Queen at a royal reception.

The meal was simple but good, like all those so far at the colony. My appetite was enormous. I found myself putting away endless slices of delicious brown bread, heavily buttered, and gulping mug after mug of cold fresh milk. It was quite a switch from my usual lunchtime routine, which involved beginning every meal with two martinis, and sometimes not bothering to have anything else.

After lunch Meehan caught up with me. "I see the Richards kid is here," he said.

I nodded. "She already tried to give me the business. Dragged me down to her cabin for a strip-tease, but she couldn't get me into the sack."

Meehan laughed. "Man, are *you* living it up!"

"Yeah," I told him. I guess in Meehan's eyes I was rapidly taking on the character of a woman-hungry satyr. Bonnie, Lorraine, Harriet, Joanie, now Sandra—all in two days. I didn't see the sense of explaining that most of these women were chasing *me*. All except Joanie, who was the one I really wanted.

But somehow I didn't feel like discussing my private life with Meehan. We wandered back to the cabin together, and he told me all about what he had discovered about organized nudism—the conventions, the squabbles between different national bodies, and all the rest. I listened politely, because I knew Jack was only talking this stuff out in order to get it better organized in his mind for the article he would do later.

I sprawled out in the grass in front of the cabin and got some sun while I was digesting my lunch. I guess I dozed off for a few minutes. I had

an odd sort of dream. Women were dancing in a circle around me. Not naked women, though. These babes were covered right up to their chins. It's funny what a couple of days in a nudist camp can do to your subconscious.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHEN I GOT TIRED OF LOLLING AROUND soaking up sunshine, I got the typewriter out again and worked on the book. I put in two more hours and finished up the outline. It was nineteen pages long. I leaned back in my chair with my feet up on the porch railing, reading what I had written and liking it. Maybe you're not supposed to like your own stuff. I don't know; I had never written a book before. But everyone in the outline seemed to be a real solid person to me, someone I could summon up practically in the flesh. And every incident seemed to grow out of the one before it. I felt satisfied. I had been terribly afraid that I would poop out, that I'd go back to Wacker Drive in a few months with no novel written, like plenty of other hot-air boys who make a big stink about how they could be making better use of their talents than writing ad copy.

But that wasn't going to happen to me. My book was going to get written.

I took a pencil and went over the outline, blocking it off into chapters. It broke up pretty well into twenty-one chapters. I figured I could do an average of three chapters a week. That way it would take me seven weeks to get the first draft written, if I stuck to my schedule. Then I could stash it away for a week to let it cool, come back to it, and spend four more weeks editing it into shape, cutting and rewriting, and finally sweating

it into what I thought would be the finished draft. When I got back to Chicago I could give the book to a typist, and by the middle of September it would be ready to go off to a publisher.

For a second I had a nice vision of the finished book, typed with a nice dark ribbon on crinkly white paper, lying in a box just before I packed it up and shipped it off to New York. It was a nice vision.

But I told myself you didn't write books in your dreams. You had to sweat them out, word by word, before that magic final day when it was all neat and packed up to go to the publisher.

I would begin Chapter One tomorrow, I told myself.

I riffed the sheets of the outline together, stuck a paper clip on them, and carefully slipped them into the folder. I laid that folder away in my dresser drawer as reverently as a new mother tucking her baby into his crib. Then I went outside.

It was three in the afternoon. The sun was strong, now, and I remembered to wear my sunglasses. I remembered how it had been at breakfast, all cloudy and cold, but that seemed long ago, on some other day.

The place was hopping. I guess there were close to forty-five people on the premises, now—getting near to capacity—and wherever you looked there were naked people having a good time. Some were just sprawled out on blankets, writing letters or reading books or dozing. The volleyball game had been resumed and was going along full blast. I watched it for a while, marveling at the way Joanie and Dr.

Richards and Ernie Bryan and the others batted that ball around as though their lives depended on it.

Before they had a chance to invite me to join the game, I moved away, heading down the hill toward the lake area. Four teenage boys and two wiry-looking teenage girls were batting fungoes on the baseball diamond. All they wore were sneakers and baseball gloves. I thought back to my own teens and tried to picture myself chasing fly balls in my birthday suit while a bare-fannied girl of fifteen took the throw-ins. Somehow I couldn't see it at all. Casual nudity between the sexes wasn't the way we had been brought up. I remembered the photos Eddie Root had passed around when we were fourteen, the photos of potbellied naked models who stared tiredly at the camera and made no attempt to look glamorous. Those photos had really heated us up.

But here—

A nicely-developed kid of sixteen was batting grounders now. He pounded one down to third and a lean, tanned blonde girl gobbled it up like a pro and rifled it across the diamond to the kid at first. The fact that the third baseman had a nice pair of breasts didn't attract any attention at all. Nor was the third-baseman at all upset by the exceedingly mature maleness of the kid at the plate. And the center-fielder, a wiry girl whose breasts were just mere points, was yelling for one to be hit to her. "Come on, Mickey, hit one over my head!"

Mickey hit one over her head. She raced back, lost it in the sun, went tumbling headlong. The boy in left field retrieved the ball, tossed it in, and went over to help the girl to her feet. She came up grin-

ning and yelled for another chance.

It couldn't have been a sharper contrast to the kind of adolescence 99% of kids have. I remembered my summer at camp, and how we spent hours watching the girls taking showers, peeking through a knothole in the showerhouse wall. That kind of hole-and-corner spying was unknown here. And no loss, either.

I went past the baseball diamond and over to the tennis court. Nick Riccio and Lorraine were on one court, volleying. On the adjoining court was a couple that had arrived that morning. A fellow of about twenty-five, a girl slightly younger. They weren't married, just good friends going away together for a vacation. She was a creamy-skinned blonde, very fair, and to protect herself from the sun she had donned an eyeshade and a kind of bolero jacket that covered her shoulders but did not quite reach down below her breasts. That was all she had on, except for tennis sneakers.

I came across Meehan down near the dock, talking to one of the new waitresses. Not the skinny one, but a full-blown brunette with oversize breasts. They didn't seem to mind company, so I went over to join them. Meehan was examining a sun-hat that the girl had given him.

"Look at this thing, Al," he said, holding it up for my inspection. "Al Fieldston, Mary Kinowski. It's damn clever, Al."

I smiled at the girl and took the sun-hat from him. It had a zipper pocket in front. I opened the pocket and looked in. It contained a comb, a pair of sun-glasses, and a pack of cigarettes.

Meehan said, "Now you know where nudists

carry their personal effects. This is a nudist special, manufactured for use here."

"You don't have to carry things in your hat, though," Mary said. "A lot of men tuck things into the tops of their socks."

I laughed. I hadn't been faced with the problem of where to keep things. My crewcut removed any bother of carrying a comb, and I rarely smoked more than a couple of cigarettes a day. As for carrying around money or keys—you just didn't do that here.

Mary looked up at me. "Jack tells me you're an advertising man," she said. "Which agency?"

I told her. She smiled. "That's what I thought," she said.

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you remember me?"

I looked at her, aghast. "Am I supposed to?"

"I worked there last year in the secretarial pool. You made a pass at me during a coffee break."

I felt myself turning red all over. I closed my eyes, trying to remember. In my imagination I clothed Mary, covering her ample breasts and heavy thighs, and in a moment I had my picture—of a dark-haired, stacked-looking girl who had caught my fancy momentarily the winter before.

"Now I remember," I said. "But—but you look so different with—"

"—with clothes on?" she asked. She stood up, patting her tummy in an earthy gesture. "Maybe it was the girdle. I always wore a tight girdle in the office. Maybe you just didn't think I had such a big butt."

We laughed over that. Score another one for this

weird nudist world. Boss could meet secretary, banker meet borrower, and the shock of nudity would blank out recognition. Sometimes even a familiar face might look strange because the unencumbered body was not what you expected. The Mary I remembered had been bosomy but well laced. This spreading full-bodied girl looked entirely different.

The afternoon passed pleasantly. I swam, played some volleyball, even got a couple of turns at bat on the ball field. I popped a couple up, then lined a sizzler down to third, but the husky kid playing there scooped it up without batting an eye. On my next swing I hit a fly to center, and watched the lithe blonde girl make the catch. I felt full of pep, better than I had felt in ages. By dinnertime I was ravenously hungry. The day had turned cool again, and I went up to the mess hall fully dressed.

There were hamburgers for dinner. I guess I ate about a dozen of them. I asked for and got some beer to wash them down.

Beer was the strongest stuff you could consume in the camp, and the supply was strictly doled out—one can at a time, and you had to prove you were holding it before you got another. The colony directors didn't want anybody drunk and disorderly on the premises.

One beer was all I wanted, though. For someone whose daily routine had included ten or twelve ounces of gin as a matter of course, I had surprisingly little interest in alcohol. I felt so healthy at the moment that the mere thought of drinking a martini was distasteful.

Bonnie cornered me after dinner.

She was dressed, more or less, wearing a thin T-shirt through which her breasts and nipples were clearly visible, and a pair of bermuda shorts. She came up to me before I could escape and said, "Al, can I talk to you?"

"Sure." What else was I supposed to say?

"Al, come to my cabin tonight. Cabin Thirteen, on the left-hand side. I want you."

Just as simple as that.

I hesitated for a moment before I said, "Please. Bonnie, don't start up."

"I kept away from you all day!! Just—just come to my cabin."

I shook my head. "Tonight's my night for celibacy."

"Darling—"

"Look," I said with some firmness. "We had our little interlude, I told you. Can't you find someone else for tonight? What about that fellow I saw you with this morning, eh?"

Scorn made Bonnie look more popeyed than ever. "He's a boy. I need a *man,* Al."

"Not this one," I said.

"I'm not ugly, am I? I'm as attractive as that waitress of yours. Or is it the Richards slut you're after tonight? Anyone but me, eh, Al?"

"Come off it, Bonnie," I said annoyedly. "I'm not interested in any of them. I just want a good night's sleep tonight. Clear?"

Her shoulders sagged. "All right," she murmured in a theatrical whisper. "Take me and cast me aside. Just like all men. You—"

I didn't give her a chance to finish. Nodding

curtly, I strode away from her and into the Social Hall.

The program for tonight was movies. Amateur movies, taken at the colony the summer before by Dr. Richards, and edited over the winter. I entered the Social Hall and found Joanie Baker and a couple of others busily getting benches lined up and the screen assembled. Joanie was more completely dressed than I had ever seen her before—a button-front sweater and a pair of toreador pants. The sweater was open in front, leaving her breasts all but bare, and the pants molded her figure sensuously. I grinned at her and pitched in with the benches. After five minutes the place was in order for the evening presentation.

"Whew!" Joanie said. "I'm all sweated up." Unself-consciously, she slipped out of her sweater and used it to blot up the perspiration on her breasts and arms. "I saw Bonnie talking to you again. If she's bothering you we can give her a warning."

"No, leave her be," I said. "I think she'll call off the hounds now."

"Let's hope so. You must be all tired out after today," she said brightly. "I saw you playing baseball, and volleyball, and swimming—"

"I had a busy day," I told her. "I got a lot of writing done too."

"I'm glad," she said. She flashed that wonderful girl-scout smile and I knew she really *was* glad. Then, splendid breasts bobbing, she skipped off to get the projector ready. Dr. Richards walked in, carrying a can of film. Behind him came Sandra. She was fully dressed, looking seductive and kittenish in her tight

sweater and tighter blue jeans. She gave me a slow, deliberately sensuous look, and walked on past.

The colonists began to assemble now. It was definitely a cool night, and there wasn't an exposed thigh or buttock to be seen—nor bosom either, after Joanie donned her sweater again. We were quite a decently attired assemblage that evening as the projector was snapped on.

The film was called, with a coyness that failed to amuse me, SUNNY DAYS AT SUNLAND. It was eight-millimeter stuff, in color. There was no soundtrack, but somebody had dubbed in a musical accompaniment. It was strictly home-movie stuff, but not bad, as home-movie stuff goes. And if the footage had fallen into the right hands it could have made quite a nifty item for the college fraternity set.

The film opened with a solid background, flesh-colored, which turned out to be a woman's back right up against the camera. She began to walk away from the lens, and it was easy to see that that back and those buttocks could belong only to Joanie Baker. When she was twenty feet away she turned and waved at the camera, front view, an effect that could blind someone who wasn't prepared for a body of such splendor.

Then the camera showed Joanie bounding across the lawn, laughing in delight as she ran, over to the volleyball court. A moment later a game was in full swing, and the camera picked up some amusing angle shots of jiggling breasts and backsides that caused general laughter. I recognized about half the players. There was a good deal of "*There I am!*" stuff from the audience, as well as identification of campers who

had not returned this year.

After the volleyball match, the camera showed some activity down at the swimming area, and then an inning or two of a nude and coeducational baseball game. A highlight of that came when Don Riemann tagged a girl out at second base by slapping the ball down hard on her plump posterior. I caught sight of a younger-looking Sandra Richards in the outfield. The camera panned to a couple of the teenage set, who giggled shrilly as they saw their immature selves of a year earlier.

After visits to the crafts shop, the mess hall, and the music room, the film concluded with an end-of-season event, the coronation of the King and Queen of Sunland. I saw Don Riemann and Joanie Baker marching in an imposing procession, wearing nothing but gilded crowns, while at their sides walked two nice-looking teenagers I didn't know, the Prince and Princess of last year's contest. There was a pageant, some nude gymnastics, and the picture came to its end. I joined in the general applause. I was almost coming to feel like a veteran member of the colony myself, by this time.

For gags, Dr. Richards then put on a black-and-white film that had been made eight years earlier. There were gasps and screams whenever anyone familiar appeared on the screen. I was duly amused to see a breastless and quite unseductive-looking Sandra wander across the screen. There was a shot of Joanie, too, looking about fourteen years old, already big and good-looking but with small breasts and narrow hips. She was shown with a woman of about thirty-eight, identified as her mother, and I saw where Joanie's

good looks came from.

When the films were over, refreshments were served and dance records were played. I took a couple of turns on the dance floor—one with bulky Margaret, for whom I felt sorry, one with Mary Kinowski, and one with Harriet.

It was Harriet who told me, "It's only on the cold nights that we ever do any social dancing here. Dr. Richards won't allow it unless people are dressed."

I was puzzled at first. But I could readily see how nude social dancing could violate the canons of decency. I held Harriet tight against me, feeling her hard breasts thrusting into me, and our bodies ground sensuously together as we moved. Obviously it wouldn't be wise to permit public nude dancing of this sort.

Harriet was interested in having me go back to her cabin with her, but I ducked out of the invitation. It had been a full day for me, and I was dead tired. I just wanted to get into the sack and shut my eyes.

At ten o'clock I returned to the cabin. With reveille at half past seven, I wasn't in much mood for late-owl stuff here. Meehan was nowhere around. I figured he was out somewhere with Mary Kinowski, trying to make some time with her.

I drifted off to sleep.

Sometimes later I heard footsteps on the porch, and I came up out of my slumbers. It was Meehan coming home, at last, I figured. Just for the hell of it, I opened my eyes and glanced at the luminous dial of my watch. Ten minutes to five. Meehan had really made a night of it, I thought. I settled back on my pillow and screwed my eyes tight shut.

The door of my room began slowly to open.

I listened to the creaking.

"Meehan?" I asked.

"No," came the reply.

It was a woman's voice.

I looked up sleepily. The cabin was pitch black, and all I could make out was the feminine figure standing in the doorway. The door inched closed. The figure tiptoed toward me.

Angrily, I remembered that Bonnie had begged me to come to her cabin that night. I figured that she had waited all night and, with dawn on the way, had decided to come to me instead. But I was too sleepy to make much of a fuss about it.

She crossed the room and slid into bed next to me. She was nude, her body warm and soft. She took my hands and put them to her breasts, and I felt firm round globes that throbbed with desire. Her hands wandered over my body, and I gasped in sudden desire. I was annoyed that Bonnie was making this much of a pest out of herself, but the moment her hands touched me I knew I couldn't resist. I wasn't going to throw her out of my bed.

Her breathing was harsh against me. My eyes remained closed, and I let her toy with me, and my hands cupped the soft fullness of her breasts, feeling the nipples hard and sharp and hot against my palms. The bed creaked with the steady motion of her hips as she rocked back and forth, waiting impatiently for me to take her. But I was still half asleep, and I was in no hurry. I stroked her body, caressing her, making her gasp with longing.

Our lips met. Her tongue slipped into my mouth.

Her hands caught my shoulders, pulling me over as she tried to slip beneath me. She had a sweet, musky smell—the smell of an animal in heat. I clung tight to her, no longer able to control my body, no longer annoyed because she was plaguing me this way.

She drew me down on top of her.

I nestled on the firm pillow of her breasts. Her legs parted to receive me. She gasped in pleasure.

"Give it to me, Al! Give me everything!"

The voice was not Bonnie's.

I opened my eyes and let them become accustomed to the dark. I stared down in surprise.

The girl beneath me was not Bonnie at all.

Not Bonnie at all.

She was Sandra.

Sixteen-year-old Sandra. Jailbait Sandra. Writhing in a frenzy beneath me on the bed.

CHAPTER NINE

MY FIRST IMPULSE WAS TO PULL away and hurl her out of the cabin. But when a man is two seconds away from heaven he doesn't pull away so willingly. Sandra's evil hips thrashed up and down, and anger coiled in me as I realized how the little teenage bitch had tricked me into loving her, and in that moment it was over for me. But Sandra gripped me tight and continued to move, until finally she let out a whimper, a long indrawn hoarse sigh, and it was ended for her.

"Get out of here now," I muttered.

"Don't be angry with me."

"*Get out of here!*" My voice was thick, harsh, strange-sounding. I was furious—furious with her because she had slybooted me into sleeping with a girl less than half my age, and furious with myself because I knew I had really been desiring her all along.

"Please don't be angry with me," she murmured, passing her hands over me in a way that made me scowl in anger and shiver in delight all at once. "It was fun, wasn't it?"

"You're under age," I snapped.

"So what? I've done this before. Don't you think I'm pretty?"

"I think you're precocious. And I hate precocious brats. Get out and let me sleep. And if you breathe a word of this to anybody, I'll break your sluttish little neck."

"I won't tell a *soul*," she promised. "And I think you're horrible for being so nasty. After all, I *did* give you some pleasure."

"Who asked you to?"

"You didn't stop me till it was all over. This isn't the right time to be moralistic, Al. You should have said something before."

"I didn't know who you were." I shook my head, realizing how silly that sounded. "I mean, I thought you were someone else."

"Who?"

"None of your damn business!"

"You were expecting someone else tonight. And I came instead, and now you're angry." She was gloating like a little girl who had done something naughty and who knew she was going to get away with it. "I think that's funny," she said. "You don't even look at the people who get into your bed."

"I wasn't expecting *you*," I said sourly. "Now get out of here before someone catches us and I get put away for statutory rape."

"Come swimming with me."

"What?"

"Swimming. Right now, right at dawn. Have you ever been swimming at dawn? It's beautiful. You think you're the only person alive in the world." She tugged at me, trying to get me out of bed.

In annoyance I yanked my arm free. She sat on the edge of the bed, cooing persuasively into my ear, and after a few more minutes I gave in. I wasn't going to get any more sleep anyway, no matter what.

Naked, we tiptoed out onto the porch. The sun

had risen, a few minutes before, but it still was no more than a faint pinkness against the horizon. Pearly grey mist shrouded the sleeping colony. Not even the crickets were awake yet. Everything was absolutely silent, held in a frozen stillness.

I looked at Sandra. She was drawing in her breath, filling her lungs to bursting, making her breasts swell outward and up. Her nipples were still stiff. She was ready for another round, I realized.

I drew in breath myself. The morning air was sweet and clean. We stepped off the porch, barefoot, into the wet grass. Silently we walked down to the lake. The morning mist was thicker down there, rising in steaming clouds from the water. The sound of a bullfrog came to us like an explosion in the quiet: *"grr-uNNK!"* Sandra laughed. Despite myself, I laughed with her.

It was cool, but not uncomfortably so. I stood at the beginning of the dock, while Sandra walked out toward the water. I watched her, eyeing the smooth curves of her back and buttocks. She rippled sensuously at every motion. As I watched, she picked up speed, running toward the end of the dock and launching herself in a slicing arc toward the water. She came up a moment later, grinning, pushing the hair out of her eyes, and waved to me.

"Come on in! It's grand!"

I walked out on the dock. Standing at the edge, I looked down, clearly seeing Sandra's nakedness beneath the crystal surface of the water. I watched the eddies rippling over her breasts for a moment. Then I dove in. The water was icy, and I came up gasping and shivering, but after a moment or two I began

to adjust to the temperature and become comfortable.

We drifted gently back and forth in the water, watching the day begin. The sun rose higher, beyond the trees to the east, and as it climbed the clouds changed colors, from gray to pink to creamy white, and the mist lifted and the sky became morning-blue. The birds awoke and began to chatter in the treetops. Bold fish leaped out of the water for a nip of fresh air, making little splashes as they slipped beneath the surface again. I saw a big old turtle crawl up onto a rock near shore to sun himself in the warming air.

After perhaps half an hour, we grew tired of swimming.

"I'm going in," Sandra announced.

I nodded. I had hardly taken notice of her. I loathed her for the trick she had played, for the self-indulgent little girl she was. What she needed, I told myself, was a good spanking administered by her parents.

She swam to the dock, breast-stroking. I followed her, treading water while she scrambled up the ladder. Despite myself I had to admire the taut loveliness of her buttocks as she clambered up the ladder.

Reaching the top, she turned and thrust a hand down as though to help me out of the water. I shook my head, but she kept the hand out anyway. I climbed up onto the coarse hemp matting that lined the dock, and shook myself dry.

Then Sandra sprang.

It is the only way I can describe it. She *sprang*, like a tigress. She leaped forward, wrapping her arms around my neck and locking her thighs around my hips. I staggered and almost fell back into the water

in my surprise. Then I managed to get control.

"Get down, you idiot!"

"Let's have some fun, Al."

"Will you get off me or—?"

She laughed and opened her legs, sliding down my body and rubbing sensuously against me. She stood flattened against me, her wet breasts sharp-pointed and thrusting into me, her arms still locked around my neck, her hips undulating in a motion that sent shivers through me.

"Do it to me, Al. Do it right here."

"Don't be crazy."

"I want it, Al! Do it or I'll scream rape. I'll scream and get you thrown out of here."

"No one will believe you."

"My father will. He thinks I'm a sweet little innocent virgin. Do it to me, Al."

I glowered at her in complete loathing. But then her hands slipped down and she began to do things, and I felt desire like a spear through me, and she dropped to her knees and began to kiss me.

She pulled me down too, and we crouched on the matting, both of us still wet, and the morning bursting all around us and the frogs doing a triple chorus. She leaned over backwards, her head touching the coarse matting, her legs an invitation.

I hated her.

But right then I hated myself more.

She groaned. She moaned. "Do it to me, Al! Give me everything!"

She pulled me down to her, and there was a devil's smile in her eyes. I thought to myself, *Suppose someone comes along and catches us now? Catches*

me making love to the director's teenage daughter? I'll get hell. I'll get thrown out of here on my ear. I'll go to jail, maybe. I'll lose my job and end up on the crap-heap on account of this little sexpot.

But I couldn't stop now. I felt the desire in me again, and I shuddered and made hoarse sounds and felt the pounding and heard the drumming in my ears. Sandra let out a gasp too, but she wasn't finished, not just yet. She continued to move while I hovered motionless above her. She was using me, now. Shakes wracked her again and again, until her appetite was sated, and she slumped down on the dock matting.

I moved away from her. I half expected to see an audience watching us on shore, but there was no one there, and silence still shrouded everything.

Sandra lay on the dock, her face flushed, her lips slack and moist.

"Come back here," she murmured.

"Go to hell."

"There's still more than an hour before breakfast. That's plenty of time for—"

"No," I said coldly. "You're a devil. A sluttish little devil. Someone ought to take a hot poker to you."

She smiled. "Why don't you try?"

I wanted to swear at her. But I knew the real evil lay in myself, for having given in a second time to her. I made sure there wouldn't be a third. Stepping across her nude prostrate form, I strode quickly off the dock, pausing near the basketball court to turn on the shower and scrub myself clean. Then I walked up to the cabins, not looking back.

It was not yet half past six. I considered getting the typewriter out and doing some work before breakfast, but changed my mind when it occurred to me that in this silence the clacking of the machine would be audible all over the camp. Instead I sat down on the porch, my mind practically a blank, to wait for breakfast.

I saw Sandra come trooping up from the waterfront a few minutes later. She did not look in my direction. Like some nude sprite that had materialized out of the morning mist, she crossed the lawn and disappeared into her cabin. For fifteen minutes all was still. Then the door of a cabin on the far side of the semi-circle opened, and a young couple emerged. It was the girl who had worn the bolero jacket on the tennis court. She and her friend ran down toward the water, hand-in-hand.

There were other pre-breakfast swimmers. Dr. Richards went down a few minutes later. Just before seven the door of Cabin Two opened and Joanie Baker emerged, looking like Aphrodite greeting the dawn. She stood on her porch, touched her toes a couple of times, and sprinted toward the lake. She saw me and waved. I waved back. I watched her vanish behind the trees.

The swimmers returned by quarter past seven. At half past, Dr. Richards appeared on his front porch to ring the big gong that summoned everybody to breakfast. I went inside and woke up Meehan. He looked bleary-eyed and unaware of anything that had happened in the last few hours.

"Breakfast," I said.

"Oh. Yeah. Yeah." He sat up sleepily and

thumbed his eyes. "You sacked out early last night, huh?"

"Around ten. What time you come in?" I asked.

"Midnight. The Kinowski girl gave me a hard time. You can look, but you can't touch. That sort of deal." He staggered off to the john. "Bet you enjoyed a vacation from women, eh?"

"Yeah," I said bitterly. "Yeah, sure."

We went to breakfast. I got a reproachful look from Bonnie—who was hurt because I hadn't taken her up on her invitation to come to her cabin—and I got a sly look from Sandra, who was rejoicing in the way she'd led me around by the nose. I ignored them both.

I got back to the cabin early and cleaned up. It was a bright, sunny day. I hauled the typewriter out onto the porch, got the folder containing my outline, matched up a sheet of paper and a sheet of carbon paper and a second sheet, rolled them into the typewriter, spaced down to the middle of the page, and boldly typed out in capital letters, CHAPTER ONE.

Then I stopped.

I stared at the page. My outline was right there next to the typewriter, but I couldn't begin.

I knew just how I wanted to begin. A scene in my hero's office, showing him in action, illuminating his character right at the start and providing a sort of overture to the story. But I couldn't decide whether I wanted to begin with a line of dialogue or a paragraph of description. I typed out some description, finally, and it sounded wooden and stilted. I threw the page away, inserted a new one, and

bravely typed out CHAPTER ONE again.

And stared at the page some more.

I knew what the matter was. It had nothing to do with nervousness about beginning the book. I knew that once I got rolling the opening chapter would flow easily. The real trouble was that I couldn't concentrate. I had women on my mind.

Too many women.

Harriet. Bonnie.

Joanie.

Sandra.

Harriet with the freckled breasts and the ping-pong paddle. Bonnie with the bug eyes and the pathetic desire to be loved. Sandra with her devil's lust, her hotbox insistence that could not be brooked. And Joanie with the flawless body and all the amorous fervor of a Greek marble statue.

They bothered me. The girls I wanted I could not have. The ones I *didn't* want gave me no rest. They made eyes at me in the mess hall, they crept into my bed in the early hours of the morning, they pleaded with me to visit their cabins after taps.

Al Fieldston, Stud.

Sure. You sit back there and you envy me. You say I'm crazy to be complaining because three different women have a need for me.

Brother, let me tell you something.

It's possible to *have enough.* I mean that. You can eat filet mignon, charcoal-broiled and dripping with juice, until your gut gives up and the next mouthful brings everything up. You can really get to despise filet mignon.

Especially when it's free.

And especially when you'd much rather be eating lobster.

The same here. Bonnie, Harriet, Sandra—I could have them any time, any time at all. Well, love is fun. But there's a challenge involved. Whether the woman is your wife or your mistress of ten years or just somebody you picked up on the corner opposite the Merchandise Mart, you want her to resist a little. You want to have to do some seducing before you get their clothes off. You don't want them to run around with everything out for grabs, and you don't want them slithering into your bed at all hours of the day or night. That kind of stuff is strictly for sultans. Me, I like a little resistance.

Bonnie didn't resist. Neither did Harriet. Neither did Sandra. For them it was Sadie Hawkins day all the year round.

Well, I didn't go for that routine. I've never seen much in shooting fish in a barrel. I wanted to have to *chase* a girl a little bit, and I didn't want to be chased myself.

I knew who I wanted to chase, too. Only she couldn't be reached.

Joanie.

I sat there and stared at my typewriter, trying to begin Chapter One, and I realized what the trouble was. I was suffering at the same time from too much sex and from frustration. I wanted Joanie. And not just to lie on that muscular body and fill my hands with those big boobs of hers, either.

I loved her.

I shook my head. *You're out of your mind, Fieldston. You don't know a thing about the girl except*

that she's either frigid or a les. Pretty, sure. Ravishing. But cut out this jazz about loving her.

I scowled at the typewriter for half an hour more. My net progress for the morning was nil. I had used up sixteen sheets of paper on eight false starts totalling maybe one hundred words. I knew when I was licked. I got up and put the typewriter away. Meehan was lying on the grass in front, scribbling notes for his article, and he said, "You giving up?"

"For the time being. I can't get started."

"Take the day off, then. Start tomorrow. Let your subconscious get the book started for you overnight."

"Yeah," I said. I walked past him and headed toward the volleyball court. A small group of colonists were choosing up a game. They were waving to me.

Joanie was there. She called out, "Hurry up, Al! You're the tenth man."

I counted up. She and Don Riemann were the captains, and Riemann's team had five, Joanie's only four. I walked out onto the court and Joanie put me up front at the net, just to her left. Someone on Riemann's team volleyed for serve. The ball went into our backcourt, where Ted Nichols passed it up to Joanie. She hit it over. It came back and went back again, and when they returned it it came down straight at me. I took it on my fingertips and popped it up in the air, still on our side of the net where Joanie could reach it.

She went high in the air and blasted the ball over the net in a perfect spike that won us the serve. As she came down she lost her balance and started

to tumble in my direction. Without even realizing what I was doing I opened my arms wide and caught her. For one moment we were together, body against naked body, her full, firm breasts warm on my skin, her thighs touching me. Then, recovering her balance, she pulled away.

She grinned. "Nice play, Al."

I didn't reply.

I was tingling all over. My skin seemed on fire where she had touched me. I was trembling like a schoolboy who had just held the class belle's hand. I could almost feel the imprint of her breasts and thighs on my skin.

Christ, but I want her! I thought.

I was still thinking it when the ball came sailing over the net straight at me. It bounced off my chest and skittered to the ground.

"Wake that guy up!" someone yelled behind me.

I looked shamefacedly at Joanie. She was smiling.

"Asleep at the switch," I muttered, embarrassed. When the next ball came at me I leaped ten feet high to smash it over the net. Like a schoolboy showing off for his girl, I thought. A thirty-four-year-old schoolboy.

CHAPTER TEN

WE PLAYED VOLLEYBALL FOR BETTER than an hour, working up a good sweat and a good appetite. Then everybody lost interest in the game all at once, and someone yelled, "How about a swim?" and the next moment we were all racing down the hill toward the lake.

We splashed around in the water till the lunch gong rang. The lunch menu was meatballs and spaghetti, and I put away three heaping portions and was considering asking for another. I felt invigorated.

I felt so invigorated that after lunch I set up the typewriter again, rolled in the sheet of paper that was blank except for the words CHAPTER ONE. and started to type so fast that I didn't have time to think about whether or not I was in the mood for writing.

The pages practically wrote themselves. I just sat there feeding in paper at appropriate intervals and watching words appear. By the time I paused for breath, it was three in the afternoon and I had done twelve pages, lightning-fast. Chapter one was finished.

I rolled the last sheet out of the machine and leaned back to read it, while my heart returned to its regular pace and some of my sweat evaporated. It wasn't bad at all. It was on the rough side, and the spelling was lousy, but the raw material for Chapter One was all there. All it needed was careful polishing.

It wasn't the same thing at all as finishing a page or two of ad copy. I was a lot more tired, but also a lot more satisfied with what I had done.

Deciding that I had put in a good day's work, I shut up shop and set out for a stroll. In the back of my mind was the nebulous idea of finding Joanie and perhaps spiriting her away for a long private talk. I figured that maybe I could get to know her as a person—without making any clumsy passes—and somehow that way contrive to break down the barrier of inhibition with which she surrounded her true self.

The trouble was that Joanie was never available for long private talks. She took her position as Dr. Richards' right-hand-man seriously. She was always wandering around the camp, organizing volleyball games, checking to make sure everyone's plumbing was okay, and generally making herself useful.

I walked up front, since there was no sign of her on the athletic courts. And I found her standing near the gate, leaning into a car that had just arrived.

The car was a convertible sports car, a little MG or Jaguar or one of those. The driver was a black-haired young lady wearing sunglasses and a striped shirt. I started to fade away, figuring that she was a guest or a newcomer and might be upset to have a naked man come wandering up.

But Joanie saw me. She waved. "Al! Al, would you come here?"

I didn't have any objections. By this time I wasn't too greatly hampered by inhibitions. I walked over to the little car. I was a little surprised to see

the driver averting her eyes from me.

Joanie said, "Al, I want you to meet Naomi Gardner. She's never been to a sunbathing colony before."

"Hi," I said affably.

"Hello," she said in a strangled voice, still not looking at me.

"A friend of Naomi's told her about us," Joanie went on, "and she decided to try us. Al is new here too," she said to the girl. "Four days ago he never would have dreamed of running around without any clothes on."

Naomi managed a smile. She was obviously having a good many second thoughts about having come here. But it was too late to back out now, without seeming like a complete coward.

I figured my presence was making it harder for her to accept the idea of nudism. I decided to fade away and let Joanie get her down to her cabin. Once she got her own clothes off, she might find it easier to adjust to the new environment.

So I invented some excuse about having to go into the library on an errand for Jack, and drifted off. I saw Joanie get into the car and it slowly moved off toward the cabin area.

The brunette was a good looker, I decided. But scared. Probably wishing she were anywhere but here. Most likely it had been a bluff. the whole idea of coming to a nudist camp. and she had never really expected actually to arrive here. Only here she was. I shrugged, figuring that the experience would do her good, and went on into the library.

To my horror, Bonnie was there.

She gave me a thousand-watt smile and inflated her lungs to perk up her bosom a little. Then she said, "Were you looking for me, Al?"

"No."

"Why are you so cruel to me?"

"Why can't you leave me alone?" I countered.

Tears glistened in her eyes. For one awful moment I thought she was going to pour out the story of her life in all its dolorous detail. She nibbled her lip hesitantly and said, in the high-pitched tense voice that was becoming so wearying for me, "Don't you want me? Don't you desire me at all?"

"Bonnie, listen," I sighed. This was taking on all the aspects of a farce. "I'm tired of having you moon after me. Find yourself someone else. If you keep bothering me I'll file a complaint against you."

Not exactly spoken like a gentleman. But, then. Bonnie wasn't a lady.

What happened next was neither ladylike nor gentlemanly. Bonnie narrowed her eyes to slits and came toward me, evidently determined to overcome my resistance on the spot. She seized my hands. clapped them to her breasts, and began to nuzzle against me, rubbing the lower part of her body against mine.

I grasped her breasts good and hard.

I shoved.

She went reeling back across the room, lost her balance, and sat down butt-first on the linoleum with a *whack!* Her face wore an expression of utter astonishment, but only for an instant. A moment later the look was one of hatred.

Any glares Bonnie had given me before were

sheer benevolent smiles compared with this. This was a sizzling stare of complete malevolence that made her look a hundred eighty years old, and sent cold chills through me. She sat up, kneeling, her legs spread, her breasts rising and falling in a paroxysm of excitement and frustration and hatred, and she looked H-bombs at me. I could only take it for a moment. I turned and rushed out, slamming the door behind me, just as the torrent of abuse began to spill from her lips.

I was shaking. I had only seen such a look of pure hatred once before in my life, and that had been in the Army. There was this recruit from Mississippi, and this big colored corporal, and the recruit made a remark about the colored boy's ancestry, and the colored boy came right back with a crack about the Mississippi lad's mother. For a moment I thought the white boy would go purple with rage. The look he turned on the corporal had been almost the equal of the look Bonnie had given me. Then the Mississippi lad came piling forward, fists swinging, and the colored corporal beat him to a pulp. The Southerner came out of it with two smashed ribs and a bunch of stumps where his front teeth had been, and after that he remembered that he wasn't back home in Crackerville now.

I didn't look back at Bonnie. I half expected her to come flying out of the library wielding a scissor or a knife and avenge the insult to her femininity. I ducked into the social hall, found nobody there, and headed back toward the cabin area.

I was just going past Cabin Six when the new girl, Naomi, appeared. She looked terribly pale, and

when she saw me she kept her eyes rigidly above my waist, as though the sight of a naked male would strike her blind or something.

She was wearing a bikini.

I was so startled I almost gasped. She was about twenty-two or so, nicely tanned, very nicely built. She had long legs and full breasts and wide shoulders, and she had this little wisp of orange and black cloth around her hips and another one over her breasts. I stood there gaping.

"Hi," she said, eyes above the beltline.

"Hi," I returned. "All moved in?"

"Yes," she said, coming down off the porch. She moved with a kind of fluid catlike grace. And the bikini heightened her considerable erotic appeal. I understood now why such skimpy swimsuits were *verboten* around here. She was practically an invitation to rape, dressed that way.

I said, "You know, you aren't supposed to wear bikinis on camp grounds."

"Really?" she said, looking perturbed. "But I thought—it was just the first day, till I got used to everybody being naked—"

"It isn't *us* you have to get used to," I said. "It's you. Why don't you go inside and take that off, and then we'll go down for a swim?"

She acted as though she had just been invited to have sexual intercourse before 100,000 people in Soldiers Field. "Oh, no," she said hurriedly. I couldn't."

"You'll have to, sooner or later, you know. They won't allow you to stay here if you don't peel."

"Just give me a few hours," she pleaded, nibbl-

ing her lips.

Well, I wasn't going to argue with her. I didn't run the place, after all. But it was damned disturbing to watch her in the seductive bikini, and I didn't like the idea of a pretty kid like this being so snarled up with inhibitions. She still hadn't lowered her eyes within range of my nudity. I pitied her. I figured she was going through hell as all of her ingrained training fought with the rules of the new society she had wandered into.

She started toward the lake, and I followed her at a few paces. There was no one else around, at the moment, but I wished someone in authority would show up. The play of her buttocks against the fabric of her loincloth was unnerving me. The quicker she got that bikini off, the less of an erotic excitement she would be, paradoxical as that may sound. Right now I was eager to see what she had under the bikini, and that was exciting me. But once I saw, I wouldn't *keep on* being excited by it. That's the reasoning of nudism, and it works.

My wish was granted. Elinor Richards appeared on the porch of her cabin and called out, "Young lady! *Young lady!*"

"She's calling you, Naomi," I said.

Naomi turned and looked toward Elinor's cabin. As she turned she inadvertently got a look at me and I saw her go crimson beneath her tan. *Nine out of ten says this kid's a virgin,* I thought.

Elinor came trotting down from her cabin. As she drew near she said, "I'm sorry, young lady. It's absolutely impossible for you to walk around our grounds in that sort of costume."

"But—just for the first couple of hours—"

"Didn't my husband explain the rules when you signed up?" Elinor asked. "Garments that might be erotically provoking are forbidden."

Naomi was beet-red now. "I—I know. But I—I just can't take everything off!" she wailed.

"Would you like to leave?" Elinor asked kindly.

"N-no. That is, I don't want to. But—"

"Hold it, then," Elinor said. "I've got something for you to wear. I'll be right back."

Elinor returned to her cabin and joined us again a few moments later. She had a white terry-cloth robe over her arm.

"Here," she said. "We call these 'transition robes'. Anyone who wears one is automatically marked as a first-timer, and gets special consideration until her inhibitions wear off. Go take that bikini off and put this on—with nothing underneath it. You can wear the transition robe until you feel comfortable without it."

Smiling gratefully, Naomi took the robe and headed back to her cabin. I sat down in the grass to wait for her. A moment or two later, she reappeared on her porch, wearing the transition robe.

She looked a little uncertain about it. It came down no more than two or three inches along the thigh, and when she walked it rode up a little bit, revealing a couple of inches of sweet buttocks and some tufts of dark fleece. She knew that she was all but naked, even though the vital areas were theoretically covered.

"You look fine," I said. "Let's go down to the

lake and see how fast you can shake off those embarrassing inhibitions of yours."

She smiled again, trying to look cheerful about the whole thing, but her eyes were still avoiding my body. I showed her the path to the lake. Nearly everybody was down there, because it was a hot afternoon. Ted and Cindy Nichols were playing tennis, Ernie Bryan was taking pot-shots at the basket, and just about all the rest were either in the water or lolling on the dock. I heard Naomi gasp a little as the full impact of sixty naked people of both sexes hit her at once. Averting her eyes wouldn't work any more. Wherever she looked, there were naked men going unconcernedly about the business of relaxing.

I said, "It's a shock at first. Like diving into cold water on a hot day. But you get used to it right away. Just take the robe off and you'll see."

"Not just yet," she said.

I led her out on the dock and introduced her to the people sprawled out in the sun. She smiled at them, but she was evidently miserable. For one thing, anyone lying on the dock could look right up under her "transition robe" and see what she was so panicky to conceal. For another, they were all naked themselves.

She took a seat on the dock, primly pulling the hem of the "transition robe" down as far as it would go. By sitting with her legs straight out in front of her, she managed to preserve her idea of decency. I decided at this point that she would have to take the next step without help, so I let her be and dived in.

I swam around for five or ten minutes. When I looked up at the dock, she was still sitting there, covered up, talking to Bess Olin.

Abruptly Naomi stood up, making an attempt to keep herself decent as she rose.

Suddenly she saw me in the water. She smiled and in one quick gesture stripped off the terrycloth robe. Nobody said a thing. She stood on the dock, looking odd with the two bands of untanned white flesh across her breasts and hips. She had nice breasts, nothing sensational but well constructed. She stood on the dock while everyone around her tried to look unconcerned, and after a moment she made a neat dive into the water.

She came up near me.

"Congratulations," I said. "It didn't hurt at all."

"I thought I'd die the minute I took the robe off. But it didn't matter," she said in wonderment. "No one seemed to *care*."

"No one did care. There's nothing startling about a naked girl here."

I swam around for a while. She left the water before me, and I was pleased to see her lying on the dock in the sun, using the "transition robe" as a blanket to rest on. So she had made the transition after all. From my vantage point as a veteran nudist of half a week's standing, I was glad for her, because I knew what sort of struggle she must have been going through.

It was getting late now, close to five o'clock. I had had a busy day, and I was tired. I went back to the cabin, planning to stretch out and read for

a while until mess call. But fifteen minutes later there was a knock on my door. I prayed that it wouldn't be Sandra or Bonnie or Harriet.

"Come in," I said.

It was Joanie.

She didn't come in. She stood in the doorway and said, "Al, are you busy now?"

"Not at all."

"Would you come over to the Richards' cabin, then? Something important's come up."

"Sure," I said. I swung myself up off the bed and followed her out. As we crossed the lawn, I saw Naomi coming up from the lake, the transition robe jauntily swung over her arm. She waved to me and I waved back. She seemed completely at ease now. I was glad she had made the grade. I told Joanie, as we walked, of my part in helping her over the hump. Joanie nodded, but she did not seem to be her usual cheerful self.

She led me into the Richards' cabin. Dr. Richards and his wife were waiting for me. They looked grim. There was no sign of Sandra, for which I was grateful. But I was apprehensive. Had they found out about my pre-dawn tryst with their daughter? Were they going to give me the heave-ho on account of that teenage trollop? I started thinking of some way to defend myself. But I knew I would have a hard time proving to them that their young daughter had seduced *me,* and not the other way around.

Dr. Richards said, "Al, there's been a very serious charge made against you."

Oh, oh, I thought. *Sunland, goodbye!* "What

kind of charge?" I asked, trying to sound relaxed.

Dr. Richards looked coldly at me. "The charge was made by Bonnie Carter. She claims you raped her this afternoon in the library."

It was such a ridiculous charge—and I was so glad that it concerned Bonnie and not Sandra—that I began to laugh. I chortled uncontrollably for a few seconds, while the Richardses and Joanie watched me sternly.

"It isn't a joking matter," Dr. Richards said.

"No," I agreed. "But the idea of my raping Bonnie—"I laughed again. "Look," I said. "I encountered Bonnie in the library. Right after I met you with Naomi," I remarked to Joanie. "Bonnie and I had a conversation, the gist of which was that she wanted me to go to bed with her and I refused. Then she began making physical overtures to me. I repulsed her. In fact, I shoved her away from me so hard she sat down. Then I walked out. There's your rape, you see?"

The Richardses looked puzzled. Joanie said, "Bonnie *has* been bothering him. I've seen her running after him since the day he got here."

"Bonnie and I had a little—ah—romantic episode my first day," I said, turning red. "Since then she's had the idea she owns me. I've tried to discourage her."

"She filed a complaint against him before," Joanie said. "The day before you came. It was pure jealous bitchiness, and I took no action. She's obviously out to get Al."

"I won't make love with her," I explained. "So she makes false charges against me."

Dr. Richards was scowling. "Elinor, get on the phone and ask Paul to come up here. And Bonnie too." Paul was the colony medic, Dr. Paul Kristin. "I want him to examine her," Richards went on. "He can tell us whether she's been raped or not. That woman's been a troublemaker for years. If she's lying, she's going to leave. But if she was telling the truth, Al—you know what that will mean."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

FOR THE NEXT TEN MINUTES I SAT around and fidgeted while Bonnie and Dr. Kristin were rounded up. They showed up, finally, and after some discussion Dr. Kristin took Bonnie into Sandra's room to examine her.

Bonnie made a big fuss, of course. She didn't want to be examined, all she wanted was justice—meaning my immediate expulsion from the colony. But she was hushed up and bundled off into the next room.

After perhaps fifteen minutes Dr. Kristin came out. He was a thin, muscular man, a doctor by profession and a nudist by hobby, who had been the staff doctor at Sunland for years.

He was frowning.

He said, "The woman hasn't had sexual intercourse in at least twenty-four hours. I'd be prepared to swear to that."

"See!" I crowed. "Told you, didn't I? She was making the whole story up out of spite."

Dr. Richards ran a hand reflectively through his hair. "Can you be sure about this, Paul?"

"Positive."

"All right," Dr. Richards said. "Al, you can go. I think I'd better have a private talk with Bonnie right here and now."

Joanie said warningly, "You've let that woman disrupt the camp for years and years, remember, Henry—"

Dr. Richards shrugged. "Perhaps I've been too tolerant all these years. But she *is* an unhappy human being, after all. I'd best talk with her."

I left the cabin gratefully. As I went out, Sandra came in, wet from a late-afternoon dip, and she looked at me queerly as though wondering what I might be doing in the cabin of her parents. I went past her without a word and back to my cabin to wait for the ringing of the dinner gong.

Meehan had returned from swimming, now. He was sitting on the porch in front of my typewriter —he hadn't brought his own—pecking away with two fingers.

"Working?" I said.

"Transcribing my notes. If I wait too long to transcribe them, I can't read what they say. Lousy handwriting, that's the trouble."

I peered over his shoulder and saw a page full of disjointed phrases, random jottings, and pure gibberish. He seemed to understand it, though. And —what the hell— somehow he managed to distill $50,000 a year worth of material out of gibberish and jottings.

He looked up. "That new one is nice."

"Naomi?"

"The one who came down to the water in the terrycloth robe. I could go for that one," Jack said.

"She's inhibited," I told him. "It took her half the afternoon to make up her mind about getting her clothes off. You should have seen her before, when she tried to go swimming in a bikini."

"What happened?"

"Elinor Richards nabbed her and gave her that

robe. She would have started a riot here in that bikini."

Meehan leaned back, smiling lazily. "I could go for that one," he said again. And the way he said it told me that he was plenty interested. Remember what I said about men wanting a challenge? I guess Jack wanted to tackle the challenge of this maidenly but sexy-looking brunette. I couldn't say I blamed him.

We went inside. I told him about the Bonnie incident, and about the pow-wow up at the Richards cabin. Then the gong sounded, and we started up front toward the mess hall.

Bonnie was not at dinner. Neither were the Richardses or Joanie, at first. They came in about fifteen minutes late, looking solemn, and sat down without saying anything to me. At the end of the meal, as I was walking out, Dr. Richards gestured to me and waved me into a vacant seat next to him.

He said, "The Carter woman admitted lying about the rape incident."

"Glad to hear it."

"For half an hour that woman spewed up her filthy soul," Dr. Richards said, shivering. "Finally I had to ask her to leave the colony. I should never have admitted her in the first place. She needs psychiatric help."

"She's going?"

"She's gone. She packed in a hurry and we saw her off five minutes before we came to dinner." He frowned. "She promised not to make any trouble for us. I hope she keeps her word."

"What kind of trouble?" I asked.

"Her kind of personality reacts to what she considers an insult with hatred."

"I know."

"Hatred and lies. She might get in touch with some newspaper and tell them that there are wild and drunken sex orgies going on out here." Richards scowled. "Most of the people of this state believe that's what goes on here anyway. And if someone who's actually *been* here says so, there could be all kinds of trouble. A police raid, photographers, bad publicity, everything. We've had to struggle for acceptance all these years, and if Bonnie decides to stir up a hornet's nest she could come close to ruining us."

As I walked away, I wondered what effect a police raid might have on my job. *"Also arrested and charged with indecent exposure and lewd behavior was Alfred Fieldston, 34, a copywriter for the advertising firm of . . ."* That sort of stuff. If it ever got into the Chicago papers, I might very easily find myself right out on my nudist butt, lenient easy-going management and all. The top brass had a relaxed attitude, all right, but they were still advertising executives, which means they were highly conservative people. Anything that might conceivably offend a client—such as eccentricity among the underlings—was to be shunned. A copywriter who grew a beard was likely to get a polite note from J. D. telling him to get rid of it "for the sake of the team." A copywriter who got his name—and the agency's—into the papers on whatever charges they might hang on a nudist was sure to get the axe.

$14,000 a year, goodbye.

Expense account, goodbye.

All on account of a bugeyed bit of neurotic tail who was miffed at my refusal to sleep with her? No. There wouldn't be any justice in the universe if Bonnie's jealousy cost me my job.

I spent a pretty uncomfortable evening worrying about the possibilities thereof.

There was no formal program scheduled for that night. The weather turned cool again, and by half past eight it was downright chilly, and everyone was not only fully dressed but bundled up in jackets as well. I wandered around, seeing what was going on. In the music room, half a dozen people were gathered around Ted Nichols, who had a banjo and was singing folk-songs. Off in the corner, some of the older folks were having a quiet game of bridge. A few people were in the library, catching up on magazines and newspapers from the remote outside world. A couple of brave souls were even watching television. It was a typical quiet night at any country resort. Dancing in the social hall, basket-weaving for the artsy and craftsy, table tennis in the rec room. I drifted around from one group to another. I was too restless—after the scene with Bonnie—to feel much like settling down in any one place.

Joanie was in the crafts room, finishing up a professional-looking pair of leather sandals. She smiled warmly at me, but obviously was much more interested in finishing the sandals than in talking to me. I left after a little while.

Meehan had already dropped his fruitless pur-

suit of Mary Kinowski and had taken up the chase of Naomi Gardner. I spotted them in the social hall, Meehan looking his usual rumpled self in clothing, Naomi looking chic and gay and *very* happy to have her body covered again for the time being. They waved to me as they came dancing by the door.

Both Sandra and Harriet were occupied with fellows. Sandra had snared a newcomer named Davis, an architect in his middle twenties whose face, all planes and angles, looked like it had come from some surrealist's drafting board. As for Harriet, she was with the new kitchen man, a hatchet-faced friend of Riccio's who had come up to work here when the influx of guests made more help necessary in the kitchen.

I hoped he would make her very happy. In the way that she liked to be kept happy.

With both Sandra and Harriet occupied and with Bonnie gone, I felt very much at loose ends with myself. Everybody else seemed to be right at home, busily involved in whatever he or she wanted to be doing, and here I was floating from place to place. I wanted to be alone with Joanie, but I didn't know how to go about getting through the impervious layer she surrounded herself with. She was working on crafts tonight, and that was *all* she planned to do. Since I was a hopeless dub at anything more complicated than tying my shoes, I didn't feel like joining her in the crafts shop, and I didn't know how to get her away. So I wandered back to the social hall and danced with the wallflowers for a while.

Meehan and Naomi slipped away around half

past nine. I was dancing with Margaret at the time, and not particularly enjoying the experience.

I realized I had been pretty dumb; I had had the inside track on Naomi this afternoon and hadn't followed things up. I had been too busy daydreaming about Joanie, who couldn't be had, and I had let this girl—who probably could be, with the right persuasion—fall into Meehan's waiting hands.

Well, I couldn't begrudge her to Jack. But I told myself glumly that I could very well be exploring the contents of her sweater now, instead of dancing with fat giggly Margaret.

Human beings are weirdos, aren't they? Bonnie, Sandra, and Harriet climb all over me, and I brush them off. Then a perfectly luscious young dish, shy and virginal and ripe for seduction, appears on the scene, and despite an initial advantage I fail to capitalize. And then, after I see someone else ploughing the pasture, I get regretful. We're never happy with what we have. We only want what can't be had, or what someone else has taken.

Filled with brooding of this sort, I wended my lonely way back to the cabin shortly before ten and got into bed. I wondered idly whether Sandra would come slithering into the sack with me again in the small hours. I hoped not. I was tremendously depressed, for no really good single reason, and I just wanted to be left alone by Sandra and any other eager tail in the vicinity.

Sandra didn't bother me. I slept the night through without interruption.

When I woke, a little before seven, it was raining. The thump-thump on the cabin roof woke me

up. I went to the window and looked out into a gray morning. Rain was falling in enormous drops. The volleyball court was a muddy shambles, and little pools of water were collecting on the lawn.

I turned around and got back into bed. But after listening to the pounding of the rain for half an hour, I heard the breakfast gong ringing right on time. I went to the window again. Dr. Richards was standing on his porch with a megaphone, and he was yelling to us to stay where we were, that everyone would be picked up and taken to the mess hall by car.

I woke Meehan up and we got dressed—warmly, because it was miserably nasty outside. Dr. Richards was going around with a big gray station-wagon that belonged to the camp, picking people up. We made it on the second trip. Breakfast was a welcome thing that morning—good hot oatmeal and plenty of scalding coffee.

It rained all day. For the people of Sunland, it was by way of being a major tragedy; it meant a day of fidgety boredom indoors, growing paler by the minute. Don Riemann conducted his morning calisthenics class in the social hall, and it was announced that various sessions of singing and dancing would be held during the day.

I wasn't interested. I rode back to the cabin after breakfast and set up the typewriter.

I thought it would be easier to work in complete privacy than out in the open on my porch. But I was wrong. The cabin was cold and drafty and not very well lit, and the melancholy drumming of the rain on the roof added to the general grey-

ness of the day. I read through the chapter I had written in such a white heat the previous afternoon, and then tried to get started on Chapter Two. But getting started was hard. I typed out an opening sentence and stared at it for fifteen minutes before I could figure out what I wanted to say next. After half an hour I had managed to string one entire paragraph together, no more.

The rain and the chill depressed me. I began to think that the chapter I had written yesterday was no good. I came close to tearing it up. Then, for a while, I decided that the whole book was no good—a hopeless waste of time on which I was expending a hell of a lot of unpaid weeks, at a net cost of better than $250 a week in salary I wasn't earning. That's a stiff price to pay for a hobby horse.

It took me fifteen minutes of staring out into the rain to get me off that kick.

I got back to work, and things went a little easier. I typed for an hour, slowly and haltingly but without any real interruption of thought, and when I stopped to rest I found I had written three and a half pages. I settled down into my chair and began to type some more, adding one word after another. By noon I had done half of the second chapter.

The station-wagon picked us up again for lunch. The spirits of the colonists were as damp as the lawn. One day without sunlight had left them all pretty unhappy and irritable.

At the table some of the old-timers were reminiscing about the weather in past years. Joanie cited one year when there hadn't been any rain at all, except a sprinkle or two, during all of July and

August. That had been hell for the surrounding farmers, and it had left the Sunland lawns looking brown and crisped, but the colonists had never had so much sunshine before.

Dr. Richards countered with a recollection of one of the years in the late '40s when there had been a solid week of rain. "It started Sunday night, and it didn't let up again until the following Saturday. Sometimes it was only a drizzle, sometimes it came down in buckets, but it wasn't dry that whole week. We thought we'd get floated away."

Something like that would be pretty grim, I thought. These cabins weren't built for lengthy occupancy. They were designed as places to sleep and hang your toothbrush; the rest of the time you were supposed to be outdoors soaking up Vitamin D.

Meehan disappeared right after lunch. Whether it was to while away the hours with Naomi or just to do some research in the colony library, I never found out. But I went back to the cabin alone and plunked myself before the typewriter.

It was a long while before I could get warmed up and started again. Writing a novel, I kept telling myself, was tough work. I wondered about the people who wrote books for a living. Every day of their lives they had to go through what I was going through right now: the awful moment when you apply the seat of the pants to the chair before the typewriter, roll a sheet of paper in, and command yourself to *produce*.

It was so easy just to get up and walk away and *not* produce. I began to be grateful I was swaddled in the protective warmth of an advertising

agency, call it prostitution or no. I didn't see how I could take the pressure of writing novels for a living, knowing that I had to produce or there'd be no cigarettes or drinks or steaks or shoes for the baby. And facing the possibility of earning absolutely nothing for your efforts. I figured I'd be happy enough to get this one book written—and, maybe, published—and then I'd get back to the Wacker Drive womb, pick up those nice fat checks every Thursday, and to hell with creativity. Let Faulkner and Cozzens and O'Hara write the novels; I'd be content to read them instead of writing my own.

But I plugged away anyway.

One word after the next after the next, telling my story, letting my hero speak out. The important thing to remember was that I had to get the book *written*. I had to tell the story from beginning to end, from page 1 to page 250 or wherever. There was time afterward to go pack and polish things up, and time after that to worry about getting it published. But the rough draft had to be there before any of the later steps could come about.

I didn't look at my watch, and I didn't get up out of my chair, and I didn't stop typing. And almost before I knew it I was rolling along toward the end of Chapter Two. Twenty-five pages of manuscript sat on the table, thirteen of them written today, and I knew now that the hardest part of the job was over. I was under way, and momentum would carry me on.

In fact, I was making damned good time. I had budgeted myself to do three chapters a week, and here were two chapters done in two days. But I knew

I couldn't keep up that kind of pace. Later on, the story got a lot more complicated. I would have to work things out in advance, then write the passages a few times until they made some sense. Still and all, I had five days left to get Chapter Three done. Which meant I could loaf if I felt like it—or, if the rain continued, I could get ahead of schedule and do my loafing later on.

I looked at my watch. Half past four. I had worked the whole afternoon. My clothes were soaked with perspiration, my legs felt cramped, my backside sore. I got up and walked to the window.

What I saw out there was a scene out of pagan mythology. A dozen naked figures dancing in the rain, their heads thrown back in joy, their tanned bodies bare to the winds and the rain.

Joanie was there, and Ted Nichols, and Don Riemann, and most of the volleyball set. Their hands were joined and they were going round and round on the grass in one of those Palestinian folk-dances where you run six steps to the left, kick your heels, run back to the right, kick your heels again, leap in the air, shout, run into the center of the ring, hands in the air, shout, run out, run to the left again. I watched them for a moment. They were having the time of their lives, and the rain wasn't bothering them a bit.

I had to admire them. They were making the most of lousy weather and having a high old time of it. A month before, I would have said they were all lunatics for dancing in the rain. Now I was eager to join them myself.

I got out of my clothes in a hurry, shivering a

little in the draft. I toweled some of the sweat off, so I'd be less likely to catch pneumonia.

I ran out into the rain.

It was cold outside—maybe sixty degrees at best—and the rain was coming down in buckets. It hit me like an avalanche of live coals, and for a moment I almost went back inside. But only for a moment. I trotted across the grass, my feet slipping and sloshing in the soggy lawn at every step, and ran up to the dancers.

The circle opened for me as I came up. Joanie took one of my hands, Ernie Bryan the other, and I got into the swing of the dance. One, two, three, four, five, six, *kick!* To the right, one, two, three, four, five, six, *kick!* Jump in the air, now. Shout for sheer joy as the cool rain cleanses your naked body.

Breasts bob and jounce. Bodies glisten in the rain. Everybody into the center of the ring, now, naked bodies practically touching, Reena Bryan's breasts inches from my chest. Throw your hands in the air and shout again. Join hands again, now, run back to the original position. To the left, one, two, three, four, five, six, *kick!* To the right—

A primitive kind of joy welled up in my throat, and I yelled spontaneously for pure happiness. I was naked in the rain, feeling warm and completely at ease in my skin, and the pure water was washing away all my troubles. Two chapters were written, Joanie of the beautiful breasts was holding my hand, and life was good.

It was a moment of complete bliss, the sort of moment Faust sold his soul for. Above us the skies were menacing, below us the lawn was mushy

and slippery. But for the dozen of us, none of that mattered. We were all one, one joyous group, dancing in the rain. One, two, three, four, five, six, *kick!*

Jump in the air.

Shout.

Everybody into the center.

We roared with delight. Finally somebody broke the circle, rolling back on the wet grass, kicking his feet in the air and laughing in pleasure. The dance ended. And in one sudden spontaneous motion everybody was hugging everybody else.

I found Joanie in my arms, her breasts hard against my chest, her loins tight against mine. For one wild moment we hugged, and then, carried away, I sought her lips and kissed her, and her lips opened to mine and my tongue slipped into her mouth.

She shivered. I didn't know if it was a shiver of delight or disgust. I released her and we backed away from each other, both of us a little surprised by what had happened. She looked confused and fuddled.

But she was smiling.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE GROUP BROKE UP, each of us heading back to his cabin to dry off. With the end of the dance, the impulse of spontaneity died away, and we were all just a bunch of cold, naked people, soaked by the rain.

I was tingling all over from Joanie's kiss. Tingling like a goddam teenager. The kiss had been part of the moment, the wild, spontaneous moment. We had both been carried away.

I wondered about Joanie. She had kissed me willingly enough, enthusiastically enough. Yet immediately afterward, despite her smile, she had worn a look of shock, a *what-have-I-done?* kind of look. And she had escaped quickly from the group, without a word to me. As though she had to get away by herself and think over the causes of the strange impulse that had led her to kiss me and let me kiss her.

I was pretty sure that Meehan had been wrong about Joanie's being a lesbian. But he had definitely been right when he said she was mixed up sexually. Frigid or just neurotically virginal, perhaps. Despite the abundant riches of her body, she had no more sexuality than a ten-year-old. Yet for one moment in the rain she had throbbed with the sort of inner warmth that befitted her superb feminine endowments.

Just for one moment.

Tingling and edgy, I made my way back to the cabin and dried myself off. Dancing in the rain had

been grand, but now I felt cold, chilled through and through. I dried myself thoroughly and dressed in fresh clothing and settled down with a book.

I couldn't read. I couldn't concentrate. That damned kiss had shaken me all up.

Tremendous sexual desire overwhelmed me as I lay there. Fierce pains sleeted through my loins, and left in their wake a dull, pounding ache. If Harriet or Sandra had walked in the door at that moment they would have been raped. Even Bonnie, if she still were around, would have been welcome. I needed a woman—any woman—to calm me, to take the edge off this throbbing excitement. But no woman appeared. First a feast, then a famine. I wouldn't find it as easy as it had been to find a sleeping partner now. Bonnie gone, Harriet involved with Riccio's friend, Sandra working her wiles on that hapless architect . . . the remaining single women in the camp were mostly dogs or else, like Mary Kinowski, they couldn't/wouldn't be made. And the one pretty girl available, Naomi, wasn't available, thanks to my pal Meehan.

So I just had to do without. Well, it was a refreshing change from the hectic humping of the earlier days. And in an odd way I felt that remaining celibate would help my chances with Joanie.

The rain continued on into the evening. Everyone gathered in the social hall for films—a couple of animated cartoons for the kiddies, and then some more of Dr. Richards' eight-millimeter films of past seasons at Sunland. Afterwards, the benches were cleared back and there was square-dancing. I danced a couple of sets with Joanie, but her behavior was

distant and formally polite, as though she still were reacting to our kiss in the rain that afternoon. At ten, when the program broke up, I walked her back to her cabin. The rain had slowed to a drizzle, now, and there was some hope that tomorrow might be a decent day.

I stood hesitantly on the cabin porch, and a wild fantasy passed through my mind—that Joanie would invite me in, that we would peel away the wet clothing that at the moment hid our bodies from each other. My hands would slide around the taut fullness of her breasts, my lips would once again seek hers, her body would come to life, her legs parting to receive me, and we would merge in white-hot ecstacy.

Just a wild fantasy. But a nice one.

What really happened was more expectable. She smiled at me, opened the cabin door, said a cheery "Goodnight, Al," and walked in.

The door closed.

I wandered away, still living my little dream-fantasy. The drizzle continued. Twenty feet from Joanie's cabin I turned and looked back. The light was on inside, and she hadn't bothered to close the shutters. She was half undressed, walking around bare to the waist. For some weird reason this peeping-tom moment excited me. I had seen Joanie in the altogether from a distance of six inches, but here she was undressing with the blind open, and there I was standing in the rain staring at her bare breasts with my tongue hanging out . . .

Human beings are silly people.

I leaned against a tree and watched her unzip

her fly-front blue jeans and step out of them. She wasn't wearing anything underneath. I could see her naked body down as far as mid-thigh.

I laughed at myself for what I was doing, and walked quickly back to the cabin. Meehan was there already, and he had a cat-with-canary-inside look on his face.

"Where were you tonight?" I asked. "I didn't see you at the movies."

"Did I miss anything?"

"Some Mickey Mouse and a film of 1954 fun at Sunland," I said. "Square dancing afterward, and Elinor served punch. Unspiked punch."

"I had a better time," Meehan said.

With Naomi?

With Naomi," he agreed. "That girl has inhibitions, you know?"

"Sure I know."

"But she can be coaxed. And when she decides to stop acting inhibited—like, *wow*, man!"

I felt a pang of jealousy. For no good reason at all, since Meehan wasn't getting anything I couldn't have had if I'd kept my wits about me. "You scored, huh?"

He shrugged. "After much travail and suasion, yes. It was indeed a struggle. But a worthwhile one. Like a rabbit, Al. Or a mink. That's how she goes. Like a friggin' rabbit."

"Were you the first?"

"Not quite," Meehan said, looking up at the ceiling dreamily. "She gave me the life history after we got tired of doing it. I'm the third, she says. You can probably add one or two to the list. She was

seduced when she was nineteen, and then again last year when she was twenty-one. Scared stiff of sex. Never had satisfaction in her life till tonight." Meehan sighed. "Ah, love! Life can be so beautiful! Yesterday she was a frightened little unvirgin who couldn't bare her fanny for anything, and tonight she's a confirmed nudist, and better still a satisfied *woman*. It's heartwarming, man."

"I'm sure it is," I said a little sourly.

"How's your novel coming?"

"I finished Chapter Two today."

"Don't rush it, Hemingway. You've got all summer."

"Yeah," I said, and moved along into my own room, feeling angry at the world and realizing I didn't have very much to be angry about that wasn't my own damn fault in the first place.

The drumming of the rain, and the general tenseness of my nerves, kept me up for a while. But I dropped off into sleep finally, and when I woke the sun was streaming in the window and it was a gorgeous day.

The grounds were a mess from the rain. But even at half past seven the sun was high and hot, and it was easy to see that by noon the day would really be a scorcher. I thought about the boys back on Wacker Drive. The office was air-conditioned, of course, but they had to step out of the office to eat and get home. It was probably 99 down in Chicago, with humidity to match. Here it was hot, but it was a dry, soul-warming heat, and there was always the lake to cool off in. Plus the advantage of having no clothes to wear.

It was such a good day that I decided to let the typewriter have the day off. Chapter Three could wait. After twenty-four dank and drizzly hours, I wanted to get out into that sun.

The trouble was that not too many facilities were available. The tennis courts would need another day to dry before they could be rolled; same with the volleyball court, though you could get up a game on the grass if you didn't mind risking a sprained ankle or two. The baseball diamond was similarly soggy and needed some toasting in the sun before anyone could use it.

The basketball court, being paved, was available. So after breakfast I got a ball out of the games shed and went down by myself to get some exercise while the morning was still young.

Playing basketball by yourself can be pretty dull. I ran up and down the length of the court a few times, taking layups and usually blowing them. When that got dull, I moved back a ways and took some set shots, at which I was pretty good, and then started throwing in some one-hand heaves from midcourt and beyond. After about fifteen minutes of steady dribbling and shooting, I had worked up a healthy sweat, and my skin was glistening. I sat down at the edge of the court to rest.

The day of rain hadn't affected my suntan at all. I was still pretty brown. It was a novelty to me to have the foot-wide strip around my middle just as brown as the rest of me, but I rather liked the effect. I also liked the way camp life had toughened me up, removing that incipient bulge around my middle and giving me some semblance of the lean.

muscular fellow I had been a decade earlier. I was lying there admiring my tanned, hairy, sweat-shiny nakedness and deciding it was about time to take some more shots at the basket when I caught sight of Joanie coming through the trees toward me.

She was carrying some folded-up canvas. She waved and smiled at me, and I got to my feet.

"Lovely morning, isn't it?" she said.

"Sure is. Where are you heading?"

"To the dock," she said. "I want to get the sailboat in shape."

The camp owned a little sailboat, hardly bigger than a rowboat. Flat-bottomed, single-masted. Sailing it wasn't particularly difficult, and it was a popular item at the colony.

I walked down to the dock with Joanie. The rowboats and canoes and sailboat were all full of water. "The kitchen boys said they'd be down to bail the boats when they were through cleaning up," Joanie said. "But we might as well get the sailboat bailed now. Want to give me a hand?"

"Sure," I said.

I waded out into the shallow water and got the bottom end of the boat, while Joanie remained on the dock. She lifted the front end and hoisted the back, and together we got the little boat up on the dock. While I was lifting, I admired for the millionth time the play of muscles over Joanie's body. Nothing masculine or overdeveloped, mind you. She was utterly feminine in every respect. But the muscles and sinews rippled the way a cat's will, and it did things to the contours of her breasts and stomach that made me catch my breath.

Once we got the boat on the dock, it was an easy matter to tip it up on one side and let the rainwater drain out of it. After the final gurgle, we eased the boat back into the water. Joanie got in it and began attaching the sail, while I sat on the edge of the dock, dangling my feet and eyeing with pleasure the golden-brown loveliness of the girl in the boat.

"There," she said, when the last knot was tied. "It's all ready now for anybody who wants to use it."

"How about us?" I suggested, surprising myself by the way the notion rippled out of my mouth. "Why don't we go take a sail, now that we've put the boat into shape?"

Joanie looked nonplussed. "But I've got to organize the volleyball game," she said weakly.

"The volleyball court's all wet," I said. "Besides, you're always organizing things or bailing boats or doing something else useful. Why can't you just relax like the rest of us? Come on—I'll steer."

It took a little coaxing. Evidently the idea of just loafing away the morning never occurred to her. Besides, she seemed a bit leery of being all alone with me in the boat. But her arguments grew weaker and weaker, and finally she gave in.

She stretched out on the cushion in the front of the boat. I climbed in at the stern, and grabbed the tiller. There was only a faint breeze, and for an awkward moment I thought I might have to man the oars to get the little boat away from the dock. But then the sail filled and bellied out, and we began to glide outward.

Now, I was an Army man, and had no experience

at navigation. But I got the hang of steering the boat quickly enough, and made the most of the light breeze. The lake was a fair-sized one, oval-shaped, with some coves and inlets down at the east end. It was ringed on three sides by dense woods; on the fourth was the Sunland dock. No doubt from time to time curious yokels from the town crept through the woods to train telescopes on the dock, but Joanie had told me earlier that it was a risky business: the woods were thick and well vegetated, with a particularly heavy growth of poison ivy. That and the barbed-wire fences helped to keep peepers out most of the time.

I headed for the middle of the lake, and then, taking advantage of the breeze, let the boat glide gently toward the coves at the east end of the lake. Joanie lay stretched out on her back, her eyes closed. She was smiling as the warmth of the sun bathed her.

Her breathtaking beauty brought a lump to my throat. It was like a dream, being alone in the boat with this naked goddess. My eyes came to rest on the clean lines of her face, on her strong throat, on the twin peaks of flesh jutting from her chest. They travelled lower, to the firm, unsagging belly, to the golden fleece at her loins, to the flawless thighs and perfect calves. And both of us naked. I fought back the wild craving to pitch forward onto her and take her by force.

"Sleeping?" I asked.

"Just relaxing," she said. "The sun's so glorious."

"It's a marvelous day." After a moment I said, "Not at all like yesterday. But there were some good moments yesterday despite everything."

"The dancing, you mean."

"And what happened afterward."

She frowned, for a moment, but she didn't seem displeased. I held my breath. She said, "Yes. That was nice too, Al. But so—unexpected."

"It's the unexpected things that you treasure most," I told her. I stopped steering and let the boat drift, and stretched out until the soles of my feet practically touched hers as she faced me in the boat. "You're a very mysterious girl, you know, Joanie?"

"Mysterious? Me?"

"Yes, you. It's funny, really. I know all about the freckle you have on your left hip, but I don't know a thing about *you*."

"Such as what?"

"How old are you, for one thing. Where you live. Where you went to school. What you do during the winter. What sort of person you are."

She laughed. "Whoa! Let me answer those before you ask any more."

"Fair enough."

She said, "I'm twenty-three. I live in Edgewater and I went to Wisconsin and majored in education. Since last fall I've been a Phys Ed teacher at a junior high, and if the Board of Education ever found out I was a nudist they'd probably fire me."

"How'd you get interested in nudism?" I asked.

"Oh, it wasn't any of *my* doing. My folks met the Richardses at some sort of political meeting, and they got converted. I came up here first when I was twelve, and I've been here ever since. For the last two or three years I've been sort of an assistant

director."

"And you took naturally to this kind of life?"

She shrugged prettily. "When I was twelve I was too young to have inhibitions. The next couple of years, when I was developing and all, I felt kind of uncomfortable here, but since then it's been all right."

"And in the city?"

"I'm the most prudish thing you can imagine," she said. "A completely different person. I don't even wear dresses with low necklines. I don't mind nakedness, but it annoys me when people try to use their bodies as bait. Hiding all but a little, and teasing people."

"I know what you mean," I said. We were practically in the cove, now. I steered us away from a shady area, back into the open. I said, "How about a personal question, now. Have you ever been in love?"

She was silent a moment. I could tell that her desire to mask her personal feelings was warring with the relaxed atmosphere of conversation I had established in the boat. She said finally, hesitantly, "There was someone—once. A long time ago. Three years."

"It didn't work out?"

"No," she said softly. "He—he turned out to be married. I'd rather not talk about it, Al."

"All right," I said. I was grateful to know that there *had* been someone in her life, once. That she was not completely sexless.

"What about your parents?" I asked. "Don't they come here any more?"

Her face darkened, and she said with some difficulty, "They're—dead."

"Oh. Sorry," I murmured.

"They were killed in an auto accident. Three years ago. Right around the same time as—as I found out about *him*. I had a pretty rough time for a while."

"I'll bet you did," I said gently. I was beginning to fill in the picture, now—of this radiantly beautiful girl who had somehow been turned into an emotional cripple by the practically simultaneous deaths of her parents and the exposure of her lover's deceit.

To get off what was becoming an unpleasant topic, I switched over and had her asking questions about me. I told her about my job, about my newspaper work, about the book I was writing. We talked about my marriage briefly—the seventeen-month deal to a scatterbrained redhead who cuckolded me at least twenty times. We talked about how much I enjoyed staying at Sunland.

Everything was just perfect. The two of us naked in the boat on the quiet lake in the warm sunlight. Her bronzed body with its improbable perfection and athletic grace. The first beginnings of a real relationship between us. It had been a wonderful hour. Even when I said hesitantly, "After the summer—perhaps we can get together for a date—" and held my breath, waiting for the steel gate to clank down.

She said quickly, "I—I don't do much dating, Al," but in the same breath she said, "But it would be a nice idea to get together. Yes. Let's."

I was on my way to success.

Then I spoiled it.

We were lying utterly becalmed in an inlet where no one could see us from the dock. I felt myself growing taut with desire for her. As she lay there, eyes closed, I crept forward in the boat toward her. My motions caused her to open her eyes.

She looked up at me, and one glance at my body and at my face must have told her what I had on my mind. I felt about three inches high. There was a mournful look in her eyes, as though my foolish moment of randiness had smashed something terribly fragile, terribly lovely. She sat up abruptly, closing her legs and drawing them up underneath her in what would have been a gesture of modesty in a girl who was wearing anything.

I made my way back to my seat, face burning. I wished I could undo that moment. But you can't turn time back by wishing.

There was coldness in her voice, the coldness of steel, when she spoke. The words were like whiplashes. "We'd better head back to the dock, Al. There's a lot of work I have to get done yet this morning."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

I DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY. Apologies would have been foolish, excuses even worse. I had stepped out of line, that was all. I had taken advantage of our privacy in the boat to assume that because she was naked and I was naked and we were alone and were conversing on reasonably intimate terms, I could then automatically go on to other intimacies. That was my mistake.

Joanie turned and looked away from me. I sat up straight in the stern and concentrated on bringing the boat back to the dock. During the ten or fifteen minutes it took to sail back across he lake, neither of us said a word. I felt like a man who had killed the golden goose, or something. I had grabbed too soon, and probably fouled up my chances forever.

The boat glided shoreward. When we were in knee-deep water Joanie hopped out and tethered the boat to the dock while I lowered the sail. We left the dock in silence. Just as we passed the oar shack, Joanie turned to me and said, "I'm sorry, Al."

That was all. Just *I'm sorry, Al,* in a small, choked-sounding voice. Then she was gone.

I stood with my hands on my hips watching her disappearing. Then I walked over to the nearby basketball court. I picked up the ball that was still lying where I had left it and fired it with all my might against the farther backboard. It rebounded high in the air and went rolling away toward the tennis court.

I wished I had pockets to put my hands in. I was in the sort of mood where you want to slip your hands in your pockets and let your shoulders sag and your arms go limp. I didn't feel like walking straight and proud now, even though that was the posture nudism almost automatically enforced on you. I didn't feel proud of anything right now.

I went over to the baseball diamond and took a seat on one of the wooden benches along the first-base line, resting my head dejectedly on my fists. It was about eleven o'clock. The sun was high and hot, and the ground was rapidly drying out. Perhaps by the afternoon the baseball field and volleyball court and all would be in playable shape.

After a while I slouched up the hill to the cabin area. A few games of catch were under way, and a few people were just lolling in the sun. The rest were down at the waterfront. I went into my cabin. Meehan wasn't there. I sat down on the edge of my bed, feeling as dismal and as desolate as I had felt since the days when my marriage was breaking up minute by crumbling minute. If I had never gone out in the boat with Joanie at all, it wouldn't have been so bad. But to go out—and then to make a crude and clumsy pass and ruin everything when all was going so well —that was what I couldn't forgive myself for.

There was nearly an hour to kill before lunchtime. In my present mood I didn't feel like going out and socializing with the carefree nudists. And naturally working on my book was impossible just now. So I pulled my legs up and stretched out on the bed to stare at the ceiling of the cabin until the gong rang.

I wasn't very hungry or very talkative at lunch-

time. The people I was sitting with realized at once that I was down in the dumps, and in a tactful way they drew a little cloak of privacy around me. In a nudist camp, where your body can never be hidden, they give you an exaggerated degree of privacy in other ways. Nobody was going to bother me if I felt like sulking. Nobody would make phony gestures of cheering me up.

Leaving the mess hall early, I wandered around the front end of the colony for a while, going finally into the music room. On a sunny day like this, I could be guaranteed a couple of hours of solitude here.

I switched on the phonograph and dug through the stack of long-plays until I found something that fitted my present mood—a disk of some Chopin played by Rubinstein. I was in a mood for cornball sentimentality, and Chopin is the best cornball stuff there is. So I sat there listening to cagy old Rubinstein spinning out all that self-pitying piano music in his masterful way, and after a while I stopped feeling quite so sorry for myself.

I told myself that things would *never* have worked out with Joanie, that we were too far apart on too many of the really important things. So maybe it was lucky that I had turned grabby at that inopportune moment. My real error was in thinking that Joanie's personal maturity was on the same level as her physical development. It wasn't. Her unhappy experience of three years back had obviously turned her into a badly neurotic woman.

That was just what I needed: a neurotic woman. Like a hole in the head.

After a little while longer I was almost convinced that Joanie was not what I really wanted. *Almost* convinced. The experience in the boat had left me with a powerful sexual longing. Unfulfilled desire sent painful throbs through my loins. After the almost feverish pace of my first couple of days in the Sunland Health Colony, my sex life had dwindled to absolutely nothing at all, while I went around chasing my golden-haired will-o'-the-wisp, Joanie. And now I was in dire need.

I clenched my fists tensely. Every nerve seemed to be twinging individually inside me. All of a sudden I was colossally horny. Joanie had left me frustrated, and I had to turn elsewhere for relife.

Where?

Bonnie was gone. Sandra was underage, though no doubt willing.

That left Harriet.

I was a bit queasy about going through another session with the trimly built little redhead masochist. I didn't even know if she'd be interested in me. For all I knew, she was getting the hell slapped out of her by Riccio's friend and was gloriously enamored of him.

But it was worth a try.

I had done her a favor when *she* was keyed up and needed relief. Maybe now she would do the same for me, I thought.

I shut off the hi-fi in the middle of a waltz and put the record away. Quickly, I left the music room, going out the back way, crossing around the mess hall and heading up the dirt road toward the staff quarters. Everything looked quiet up there. Doubt-

less the cooks and waitresses and all were down at the lake with everyone else, having a good time on this sunny day.

The cabin that Lorraine and Harriet shared was at my left. I walked up onto the porch and knocked at the outside door.

No answer.

I started to turn away. But I heard sounds coming from within.

Sounds like sobs.

I stood there a moment longer, listening. Yes, someone definitely was inside. I knocked again, and, getting no response, turned the handle and let myself in.

Harriet's door stood open, and her room was empty. The sobs were coming from Lorraine's room, whose door was closed nearly all the way.

"She isn't here," Lorraine said in a dismal voice, broken with sobs. "She and Tony are down at the waterfront."

Cross that idea off. I thought. But Lorraine was still sobbing. I hesitated outside her door, wondering if I ought to butt into her business. I was half perturbed by her sobs, and—I admit it—half interested in the notion of taking a tumble on the bed with her, if she were in that kind of mood.

I said through the door, "Are you okay, Lorraine?"

Sobs.

"Lorraine?"

"Who are you?"

"Al Fieldston."

"Go away." More sobs.

I decided to chance it. I pushed the door open and walked in.

The room was a mess. The dresser was overturned, the chair was broken, the closet had been dumped. Lorraine was lying face down on the unmade bed, her head in her hands. She was naked, of course, and every few moments I saw the tender flesh of her buttocks quiver as a sob racked her.

She looked up at me.

She was more of a mess than the room was. Her lower lip was split and bloody, her eyes were red from crying and she had the beginnings of a neat shiner on her left eye. There were scratches on her breasts, and the marks of punches here and there on hr body.

"My God," I said. "What happened here?"

She shuddered. She looked pathetic, naked, bedraggled, battered.

"Riccio," she said in a hoarse voice.

"What did he do?"

She turned eyes wild with fear on me. "He's drunk," she whispered. "He went into town last night and bought a bottle of whiskey, and he was up half the night drinking it. He was drunk in the kitchen this morning, and then just before lunch he finished the rest of the bottle." She shivered. "The cook threw him out of the kitchen and told him to pack up and clear out. Instead he came back here and waited for me. He was here when I came in after lunch. He—he was angry with me. He said I made him jealous. He—he beat me up."

She began to sob again. I stood above her, lifting her face, and saw that her eye was rapidly swell-

ing shut. He had really given her a pasting.

"He wanted to make love after he finished hitting me," Lorraine went on in a rasping whisper. "Of course I wouldn't. So then he threw himself down on top of me and forced my legs apart and—and—" She buried her face in the pillow, unable to go any further. Any thoughts of making love to her myself had long since vanished from my mind. Lorraine drew her legs up, huddling in a pitiful little fetal ball, sobbing constantly at the outrage that had been done to her.

"Where is he now?" I asked.

"I don't know," she said in a hollow, muffled voice. "When he was through—through *raping* me, he went away. He said I should wait for him here, that he'd come back in a little while and—and do it again. But that was half an hour ago. I don't know where he is. But he's dangerous, Al. He's dangerous when he's sober, and he isn't even sober now."

"You mustn't stay here," I said. "Come on with me. I'll take you to the Richardses, and then we'll catch this Riccio and see that he's put away."

"No! I'm afraid to leave! If he comes back and finds I'm gone, he'll kill me!"

"He won't touch you," I said. But Lorraine would not budge. She clung to her pillow, shivering and sobbing, insisting that she was afraid to leave. I scowled indecisively and finally made up my mind to leave her here.

"I'll send someone to stay with you," I told her. "Don't worry about Riccio. He won't touch you again."

I darted out quickly. My heart was racing. A

drunken rapist was just what a nudist colony needed least. All of my original suspicions about Riccio were confirmed, now. I felt almost sick with anger at the thought of what he had done to Lorraine, and of what he might be doing at this very moment to—to *Joanie*, I thought, and the sudden wave of alarm that swept through me told me that I had been only fooling myself in the music room when I had persuaded myself I did not love her.

The thing to do now was to get back on campus and alert Dr. Richards about what had happened. Then someone could be sent up to comfort Lorraine while a posse of men hunted down Riccio. What would happen after that, I didn't know. Dr. Richards might not want to risk phoning the police, and might simply expel Riccio from the colony without dragging in unwanted publicity. Well, that was his problem. The important thing was to get the news to him that Riccio was marauding somewhere on the colony grounds.

I passed the mess hall and started down the road to the cabins.

I heard a scream.

My first thought was that the scream had come from the staff cabins, that it was Lorraine screaming —perhaps at Riccio's return, perhaps at the mere retrospective horror of what had happened. I stopped short, about to whirl around and retrace my path back to Lorraine's cabin, when I heard the scream again.

This time the scream was cut off before it reached its peak. And it had not come from behind me.

It had come from the left, where a back road

led from the baseball diamond to the social hall past the auxiliary tennis courts. The road was rarely used, and massive oaks gave it a secluded atmosphere, hiding it from view at any considerable distance.

I started to run.

A row of little hemlocks had been planted at the entrance to the road, screening it. I darted around the hemlocks and stopped.

There was Riccio.

He was busily trying to rape Naomi Gardner.

Naomi lay on the ground, naked. Her dark hair was flying in every direction and her breasts rose and fell wildly as she struggled to keep Riccio away. He was kneeling above her, naked too, looking like some wild satyr, his maleness aroused, and he was desperately trying to force her legs open and keep her from screaming and prevent her from kneeing him in the groin, all at the same time.

He had one of his knees forced between her tightly-clamped thighs, and slowly, inexorably, he was forcing her legs apart. In another moment he would be able to thrust himself between her legs and take the girl. Roughly, brutally, a searing experience that would remain imprinted on her brain the rest of her life.

I'm not exactly the hero type, as I may have already made clear. But there are certain times when even the most pacifistic of men doesn't stop to weigh the ifs and buts. This was one of those times.

"Riccio!" I yelled, and I hardly recognized the sound of my distorted voice. "Riccio, you drunken bastard, get off that girl!"

And I went plunging forward.

Riccio saw me and looked up, scowling, his dark, long-beaked face a mask of utter hatred. For a moment it almost seemed as though he would ignore me and continue forcing the girl, now that he had practically succeeded in prying open her legs. But I kept on coming, and he rose from her to turn to me.

I had him by fifteen or twenty pounds, but that was where my advantage ended. He was a couple of inches taller, a whole lot longer of arm, and ten times as mean. He was younger and tougher, too.

Naomi rose to a sitting position, her eyes blank with terror. I screamed at her to run and get help, but she just sat there uncomprehendingly. In a state of shock, I guess.

I practically collided with Riccio.

One long arm snaked out and crashed into my face. No teeth went, but I felt my lips slicing against my choppers, and warm, salty blood spurted into my mouth. At the same moment I barrelled a punch straight forward aimed at Riccio's bony stomach. It landed and produced a satisfying grunt from him.

The idea of physically fighting another human being had not occurred to me in more years than I cared to think about. But I was in it now. I was profoundly grateful that we were both naked. Riccio was the sort who would be carrying a knife, if he had any place to keep it. But he wasn't wearing a thing—no hat, no socks—and so I knew I had nothing worse to face than his bare fists.

Drunken, bloodshot eyes loomed up in front of

me. A hand clawed for my face. I swiped it away and started to aim a body-punch, when his leg began to rise. I got out of the way just barely in time. I had more to fear than fists, evidently. Riccio was going to fight me tooth and claw.

I parried a couple of other wild kicks and punches, and tried to get close enough to him to land one myself. But his long arms and legs kept me at bay. Naomi still sat stupidly in the grass, watching us in a dazed sort of way and ignoring my shouted requests for help. I envisioned myself getting beaten to a pulp by this drunken madman before anyone heard the sounds of battle.

But Riccio *was* drunk. That was my salvation. It made him an unpredictable opponent, but it also interfered with his coordination.

We traded a couple of wild blows. Then he reared back and aimed another kick at my groin, but this time I was ready. As the foot came up, I sidestepped and wrapped both my hands round his bony ankle and yanked. He came skidding forward on the grass and tried to pull free, but I held tight, and he started to topple. He went over in a spidery tangle of arms and legs, yelling in agony as his other leg folded up underneath him, and the next moment I was sprawling on top of him.

He still had plenty of fight left. He smashed me in the midsection hard, two or three times. I just wanted to pin him. His leg was still caught under him, and if I could only get those flailing arms to hold still—

I tried to pinion his wrists. He squirmed loose and managed to roll halfway over, freeing his leg

and nearly throwing me off. His ugly face was contorted with hatred and contempt. He arched his back, trying to toss me, and I grabbed his throat, feeling the protruding adam's-apple against my palm.

"Lie still or I'll choke you!"

"Go to hell."

I tried to tighten my grasp, but he caught my wrist and started to pull my fingers off my hand, and I had to release him. He writhed again in an attempt to throw me off. This time he nearly succeeded. He moved two feet along the grass, but I moved with him. One of his arms was pinned down, now, but the other moved freely, clawing at me, going for my eyes. I heard Naomi stirring behind me; she was coming out of her daze at last. But I didn't know how long I could hold out against Riccio. I was running out of breath fast, and before very long I would have to release him.

Once he got the upper hand it could be slaughter. He was just drunk enough not to worry about gouging out my eyes, kicking my teeth down my throat, or otherwise messing me up.

Luck was with me, though. Luck and a bit of flexible morality. What I did wasn't exactly approved technique for gentlemanly fighting, but I didn't see why I had to stick by the rules if my opponent didn't.

His shift in position had brought his head within a couple of inches of a large flat rock. I wriggled him over a little more. Then I buried my fingers in the thick, greasy coils of his hair, lifted his head about four inches off the ground, and

smacked it down hard. He let out a yelp and struggled hard to break free. I grabbed him and banged him down again. I think I might even have wanted to kill him, just then. But his eyes started to glaze. I gave him a third smash and felt him go limp all over. His head lolled to one side. I clung to him for a couple of moments, on the wild chance that he might be shamming, but he didn't move. He was out cold. I didn't feel like a conquerer, somehow.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

I GOT UP SLOWLY, KEEPING MY EYES on him, but he was stretched out like a long strand of cold spaghetti. Naomi was gone. For help, I hoped. I staggered over to one of the big oak trees and proceeded to lose my lunch. I was shaking all over. my face felt battered and swollen, my mouth was full of blood. But far worse than any of the bruises or cuts was the psychological effect. I had never been a very good soldier, and in the years since my discharge I had grown rather civilized. To be thrown back fifty thousand years in a twinkling is an upsetting experience. I had fought with a man—a drunken beast of a man—and I had knocked him out, perhaps had fractured his skull. maybe had come within one bang of killing him altogether. And we had been naked while we fought. It was something straight out of Neanderthal days, and now that it was over I was shocked and revolted by the ugliness of the fight, by the mere fact that such a conflict was still possible in our allegedly civilized era.

I clung to that big oak until the wave of nausea passed. After a minute or two it was gone, and I felt mostly just the aches and pains Riccio had inflicted on me.

I began to walk uncertainly down the road toward the cabins.

Riccio stayed where he was. Every five paces I looked back, half expecting to find him charging

toward me with a boulder held high, but he was really out.

It was perhaps a hundred or a hundred fifty yards from the place where we had fought to the bottom of the sloping hill on which the cabins were. I moved slowly, each step sending a shaft of pain through my body. I could still feel Riccio's fists landing under my heart, landing in my mouth, in the pit of my stomach. And I could still hear the dull thunking sound of his head hitting the rock.

I had gone about half the distance when people appeared in front of me. At first it seemed like an entire army, but I realized dimly that there were really only five—Joanie, Dr. Richards, Meehan, Naomi, and Ernie Bryan. I stood still, swaying like a tree in the breeze and feeling ready to topple.

"Riccio," I muttered thickly.

"Where is he?" Dr. Richards asked.

"Back there. On the ground. I hit his head against a rock and knocked him out."

My legs felt weak. My knees were turning to water. The world was spinning around me. I looked at them—at Naomi, pale and frightened, at Joanie, eager and anxious, at the men, grim and determined. Don Riemann and Ted Nichols came running up. Riemann said, "Where's Riccio? Where'd he go?"

I pointed back behind myself. Then my legs gave way altogether, and I started to fall forward as my feet slid backward.

Riemann caught me and eased me to the ground. I sat there muttering something and feeling very stupid for the flop. I tried to get to my feet, but it was no go. Strong hands hoisted me up. Riemann

and Joanie, they were. They started to carry me, half-dragged between them, up the hill to my cabin, while the rest of the posse took off in the direction of the prostrate Riccio.

I'm a little fuzzy on what happened next. I know they got me to the cabin somehow and stowed me in bed. Then I have confused recollections of people coming and going, and very little idea of how much time had passed before I opened my eyes and saw Dr. Kristin looking down at me.

"Drink this," he said, and gave me a spoonful of something sweet. I got it down—though I had to struggle to keep it down—and lay back. He went to work with some cotton, squeegeeing the blood away from my face and examining my cuts and tidying them up. He gave me a quick once-over to check for broken bones. Evidently he decided there weren't any, because after ten minutes of poking he gave up and left.

I was alone.

Or so I thought. I closed my eyes in the dark cabin, and waited for the various places that hurt to stop throbbing. After a while most of the pain subsided, and I opened my eyes again and was most agreeably surprised to see Joanie sitting in my chair, staring at me with wide, worried eyes.

"Feel better now?" she asked.

"A little." My lips felt like platters. "What time is it?"

"Half past four."

"Morning or night?" I asked.

"Afternoon," she said. "You've been asleep around twenty minutes."

"It seems like hours." I was silent, digesting that fact. It was just a couple of hours since my fight with Riccio. And it was only six hours since my goof in the boat with Joanie. It seemed like all that had happened days and days ago.

But she was smiling tenderly. I wondered vaguely if the incident in the boat had ever really happened.

I said, "What's with Riccio?"

"We called the town police, and they took him away. It was the only thing they could do."

"He didn't make any trouble?"

Joanie laughed. "He didn't wake up until half an hour ago. He's got a concussion."

I winced. Then I told myself not to be sorry for anything. Riccio had been vermin, and if he had been in my place and I in his I would have been lucky to get quit of him with nothing worse than a concussion.

"How's Naomi?" I asked.

"Doc gave her a sedative. She'll come out of it, probably. Right now she's in bad shape—shock, all that sort of stuff."

"Riccio didn't have time to rape her," I said.

"He came close enough to give her a good case of the heebie-jeebies," Joanie said.

"And what about Lorraine?"

"Elinor's with her now. She's been hysterical all afternoon." Joanie scowled. "Oh, *damn* Riccio!"

"He won't cause any more trouble now. They'll give him twenty years."

"That doesn't undo the damage to Lorraine and Naomi!" Joanie said passionately. Then she

shook her head. "But I'm getting you all upset, and you're supposed to be resting. Maybe I ought to leave and let you get some sleep."

"No. Stay here."

I closed my eyes again. I didn't hurt so badly any more, but the aftermath of the fight had left me sort of weak and wobbly, and I didn't want to be alone. I wondered why Joanie had elected to become my bedside guardian. Surely she didn't have any lingering feeling of fondness for me after the crude stunt I had pulled in the sailboat that morning. Maybe it was just her maternal instinct coming to the fore now, I thought bitterly. Maybe she figured that I was too woozy to make any passes now, and so it was safe to come tend me.

Be that all as it may. I lay there quietly in the dark, happy just to know that she was in the room and watching me. Five silent minutes went by. Then I became aware that she had crossed over from the chair and was sitting on the edge of my bed, her lovely naked body only a few inches from my own.

She put her hand gently over mine. I smiled at her, though it hurt my lips.

She said quietly, "Al?"

"Mmm?"

"Will you let me say I'm sorry?"

I frowned. "Sorry about what?"

"This morning."

"*I'm* the one who ought to apologize for this morning," I said, my heart beginning to race again.

"No," she said. "I ruined everything. It could have been so perfect. Only I saw you coming toward

me and I went cold all over. I just couldn't help myself. I had to get nasty."

"Joanie, look, don't blame yourself for—"

"But I *am* to blame. Al, why am I like this? Why am I so cold? Why do I turn on the freeze any time anyone gets interested in me?"

I didn't answer her—how could I?—and I turned my head away from her so I wouldn't have to stare at the breathtaking profile of those two jutting breasts. Right now I just wanted to rest—or so I thought.

But Joanie went on, "I was cruel this morning, Al."

"Please. Let's not talk about it now."

"I'm sorry. You're not in any shape for this kind of discussion," she said gently. "But it was just that we're alone now—the way we we were alone this morning—and I thought perhaps I could make some sort of amends."

I didn't know what she was talking about. I was in a sort of mental fog, I guess.

But the fog lifted abruptly when she put her hand on my thigh. Involuntarily I caught my breath. This was a Joanie I had never known before.

The hand moved—slowly, tremblingly—across my thigh. The moment she touched me, I stiffened with desire, and I felt confused and bewildered, embarrassed before her, not understanding what she was doing. But then she was lying full length next to me on the bed, and I was on my side facing her, and suddenly I had forgotten all about the fight with Riccio, and I was one hundred percent alive again.

My breath came in short gusts. Joanie was smiling strangely. She took my hand and lifted it until it was on her breast. She clasped it against her left breast, and for the first time in reality I felt that marvelous mound of flesh in my hand, and it was warm and firm, the nipple jutting up steeply. and there was the pounding of her heart behind her deep bosom, and she let out a little sigh and wriggled her body in pleasure as my fingers grazed the terribly soft flesh just about the nipple, and tightened once again on the entire wonderful globe of the breast.

She said softly, "I've wanted so much to tell you, Al. But the words would never come. I kept running away instead of telling you. I liked to see you involved with Bonnie and Sandra and Harriet, because that gave me an excuse not to tell you."

"Tell me what?"

"That I love you, Al."

My other hand moved up her body, up that smooth sweet flank, over the taut muscular sleekness of her satiny buttocks.

"I love you too, Joanie. Right from the start, I loved you. From the very beginning. And all those other girls kept getting between us."

"They won't any more."

"No one will get between us."

"Al—do you still hurt?"

"Not very much."

"I've been thinking about this ever since the boat this morning. I was going to come to your cabin tonight, to give myself to you. But then you had that awful fight—I volunteered to stay here—

and suddenly I couldn't bear to watch you any more, I had to get into the bed and have you touch me, and touch you, and *oh! oh, darling!*" she breathed as my hand swept past her knee, over the satiny flesh of her thighs. Her breath began to come faster and faster, and I had to bite down on my tongue to keep myself from rushing things. I wanted to burst out crying for sheer joy at having this splendid female at last in bed with me. Even if I were too battered to take full advantage of her magnificent body, it was still something I had dreamed about like a small boy dreams of a vanilla ice-cream mountain.

"Be gentle," she whispered. "Be gentle, my darling, be gentle."

Her strong arms cradled me gently, and suddenly I was with her, feeling that powerful yet womanly body throbbing beneath me. Her eyes were open, and there were tears in them, but she was smiling, and my mind went back over all the hundreds of times I had wished for this moment to be taking place. It *was* taking place now, she beneath me, her firm breasts flattening against my chest, her body against mine, her breath coming in irregular little bursts.

I felt her trembling with fear and love, and I vowed to myself that this would be an experience for her that would wipe out whatever nightmares lurked in her mind. I remained still a long while, holding her tight and loving her motionlessly, waiting, letting her body accept what her mind was doing.

And then I felt her quiver and her muscles contract, and I knew she was ready and I began

to move, and she moved too, frightened and nervous at first, then joyous as the warm flood of sensation stirred her. I could tell that this wasn't her first time, but that she was inexperienced, perhaps had made love to the long-gone deceitful one no more than two or three times, but now her body radiated love the way it had once seemed to radiate light.

I felt none of the pain of my fight. Everything was warmth and love and the merging of two human beings. I arched slowly back and forth while Joanie gasped and whimpered.

Then she came to life.

All the superb power of her body was unleashed in a frenzy of excitement that probably astonished her. She tightened constrictingly around my body and she arched her back so high I was lifted high in the air, and she began to move, wildly and inexpertly and with complete natural grace, her body gripping me and every muscle of hers rippling and flowing, and I felt the thunder, the booming explosions, and felt the shudder ripple through her body too, and then the arched back subsided and I slumped down limp above her. I felt drained and completely exhausted. I opened my eyes and saw Joanie smiling at me.

We lay that way for a long while, her body strong and firm beneath me.

"Am I too heavy?" I whispered after a while.

"Don't be silly."

But I felt that I was crushing her, and so I rolled over to one side, and there were her splendid breasts with the nipples still stiff. I touched her breasts as though I were handling the jewels of

the madonna. It was with complete reverence, and nothing of lust, that I tenderly kissed her body. What we had just completed might have looked to an outsider like an animal-like act of savage lust, but to us it had been different.

It had been something like a sacrament.

We lay side by side for a long while. I began to ache again from my bruises, but in the afterglow of loving Joanie I hardly cared.

"Happy?" I asked.

"Very."

"Me too," I smiled.

"It's too bad, though—"

"What is?"

"That we wasted so much time," she said. "All these days we could have been together."

"There'll be plenty of time ahead of us."

"I know, darling." After a moment's silence she said, "I was such a sick girl until this afternoon. And now—now you've liberated me, Al. I was afraid. Afraid of people, afraid of sex, afraid of being in love. So I hid behind masks. I played volleyball and went water-skiing and tried to pretend I wasn't a woman."

"Don't talk about yesterday, Joanie. Let's think about tomorrow."

"All right," she said. She nestled up against me again, and I put my head on her breasts, and closed my eyes.

I dozed off for a little while. I woke when I heard the outside door of the cabin slam. I looked around, half surprised to find myself in bed with Joanie, and she smiled at me.

"It's Jack," she said. "He's been with Naomi."

"I better go talk to him," I said.

Joanie looked around alarmed, as though she didn't want Jack to know she had been to bed with me, and then she smiled, thrusting down this outcropping of her old frightened self. I swung my feet off the bed and stood up. I was weak, but generally okay. I walked slowly toward my bedroom door. Interestingly enough, Joanie had taken the precaution of locking it—to prevent any interruptions of what she had made up her mind to do.

I walked into Meehan's room. He seemed very serious, much more so than I had ever seen him before.

"You all right?" he asked.

I nodded. "I'm okay. How's Naomi?"

Meehan shrugged. "The kid had a rough experience. Doc Kristin gave her some sedatives. I talked to her a while before she went under. I think she'll be able to forget what happened."

"I hope so."

Meehan's lips trembled. That wasn't in character with Jack at all. He saw Joanie standing behind me, and he frowned a little, and then he said, in a quavery sort of voice, "Al, I want to thank you. If you hadn't fought off Riccio, he might have—he might have—" Meehan paused. "I mean, Naomi means a lot to me. More than I really suspected, until this afternoon. And—and I'm grateful for what you did."

"Skip it," I told him. "It could have been anybody."

I'd never seen Jack Meehan looking maudlin be-

fore. I realized what had happened: the flip, cynical gay blade had actually gone and fallen in love!

Well, he wasn't the only good bachelor to bite the dust that day.

I said, "Just to change the subject, Jack, there's something I think you ought to know. Joanie and I —well, we're—well, we're keeping company."

"He means we're engaged," Joanie said. She laughed good-naturedly and added, "And really we're as good as married already."

Mechan looked dumbstruck. But he managed a smile and a shaky laugh. "Gosh," he said. "Gosh, that's—that's wonderful, Al. That's really tremendous."

I slipped my arm around Joanie's shoulder. She stood there, my big glowing golden girl, more radiant than ever now that she had at last become a woman. I told myself that there might be a couple of weeks' delay before I had a free moment to get back to work on that novel.

I said, "You see, all I was doing was evening the score, Jack. I owed you a favor, because if you'd never brought me here I would never have met Joanie, and—and—well, it works out nicely, doesn't it?"

"Very nicely." Jack said. He was smiling broadly. "Christ everlasting, but I just got a swell idea."

"What?" Joanie and I said at once.

"The perfect scene for kicking off my article," he said. "A description of a wedding. No, a *double* wedding. A double wedding with brides and bridegrooms and guests and everybody in the nude."

I began to laugh. It was a swell idea, I thought.

A perfectly swell idea. We could be Best Man for each other, and we could import a nudist minister to read the ceremony, and—we all laughed roaringly and threw our arms around each other, and Jack gave Joanie a big kiss, and even though both of them were stark mother-naked I didn't mind at all.

THE END

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